Accessibility and Rehabilitation Plan

NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

Newton, Massachusetts

Newton Parks and Recreation Department

WALKER-KLUESING DESIGN GROUP

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June 2006

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Cover image from 1909 City of Newton Public Documents [Annual Report]

All contemporary photographs are by Walker-Kluesing Design Group unless otherwise noted

Sledding, December 2005

Executive Summary

Newton Centre Playground is a 17.9 acre historic park centrally located in the community. It has served as a central gathering point for both active and passive recreation, formal civic functions and as an informal meeting place for citizens year round for over 110 years.

Created as a result of civic interest and involvement, Newton Centre Playground was conceived of as both a playground and a park. The intent was to serve a broad audience by balancing the activities of a playground with the calming qualities of a park. It was the first playground in the city and one of the earliest in the nation. The initial design was prepared by the firm of Frederick Law Olmsted & Co. in 1890.

PURPOSE AND GOALS

The purpose of this study is to develop an accessibility and rehabilitation plan and implementation plan for the entire playground that can be used as a guide for both long and short term planning and improvements.

General goals include making the playground accessible, rehabilitation of this historic resource in a contemporary context, reinforcement of an overall image that is compatible with the historic background of this playground, and increasing passive recreation opportunities while maintaining the active recreation components.

METHODOLOGY

The study began with on site investigations and a review of available historic and current materials found in the files of the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Newton Parks and Recreation Department, Newton Public Library and Newton Historical Society. Correspondence files of the Olmsted firm at the Library of Congress were not examined, although not for lack of effort. Files at the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities [SPNEA] and other repositories of historic information were also not examined. The Massachusetts Historic Commission has not been contacted in regard to records of any archaeological investigations that may have taken place in the playground. Public meetings were held to develop and refine the concepts presented here.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is organized for easy reference by the Newton Parks and Recreation Department and others who may participate in completing components of the rehabilitation, restoration, preservation and maintenance efforts.

General information is presented first with some historic background on the development and evolution of Newton Centre Playground. This is followed by a site specific overall plan for the playground including an assessment of existing conditions and specific recommendations. It includes general recommendations for the rehabilitation of historic and other components, prioritized cost estimates for work in the playground, and administrative and maintenance management issues and recommendations. The appendix contains a chronology of the playground, a list of Olmsted firm correspondence related to the playground, a list of available drawings and a selected bibliography for further reading.

LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION STANDARDS

The 1996 Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* with *Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* addresses four treatments: preservation; rehabilitation; restoration; and reconstruction. "Of the four, Preservation standards require retention of the greatest amount of historic fabric, including the landscape's historic form, features and details as they evolved over time. Rehabilitation standards acknowledge the need to alter or add to a cultural landscape to meet continuing or new uses while retaining the landscape's historic character. Restoration standards allow for the depiction of a landscape at a particular time in its history by preserving materials from the period of significance and removing materials from other periods. Reconstruction standards establish a framework for recreating a vanished or non-surviving landscape with new materials, primarily for interpretive purposes."

This property is historically significant for a number of reasons. It should be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, although no such attempt has been made to date.

Given the historic nature of the property, the overall treatment goal for the site is rehabilitation. This is the only appropriate treatment because current conditions require acceptance of nonconforming activities.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Newton Centre Playground is a significant historic public landscape that expresses the design vision of the Olmsted firm. In a relatively small space it exemplifies the important qualities of a larger Olmsted park. The basic historic structure of the park is intact although much of the detail is missing.

Overall Concept

The primary goal is to recreate the image of Newton Centre Playground in accordance with that envisioned by the Olmsted firm in 1890 and 1891, and as later modified by Herbert Kellaway, while adapting selected areas to accommodate existing and proposed changed needs and conditions using design principles established for the park at that time. Newton Centre Playground was Newton's first playground and is still considered by many as Newton's most important character defining public open space. It created a strong sense of civic pride in the center of the city that remains today. The intent of the plan is to rehabilitate the playground, thereby restoring the central character of the community.

The following summary includes the most significant recommendations for achieving that goal.

NEWTON
Parks & Recreation

Accessibility and Rehabilitation Plan

NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

City of Newton Parks and Recreation Department
Newton, Massachusetts

Walker-Kluesing Design Group
Bellalta 3 Design
Judith Nitsch Engineering, Inc.
May, 2006
scale: 1" = 60'

Access, Circulation and Parking
Vehicular Access and Circulation: Provide 12' minimum paved width emergency/service vehicle routes to provide access to each of the major recreation facilities in the playground. Maintain the Centre Street entrance for emergency/service vehicular use and restrict vehicular access into the playground from other points. Maintain service access to Mason-Rice School from Tyler Terrace.

Parking: Continue to make use of on street parking without providing parking facilities inside the playground. Utilize the Mason-Rice School parking lot to provide additional parking for the playground. Designate on street handicap parking with 2 spaces each at Homer Street, Bowen Street and Tyler Terrace.

Pedestrian Access and Circulation: Provide a complete interconnected pedestrian circulation system serving playground entrances and recreation facilities. Assist in completing links to other areas and trails outside the playground. Walks should retain a generous width, 6' minimum, as is appropriate from a historic and use perspective. At the Recreation Center, repair the stepped ramp on the east side of the building and remove the steps and path below.

Universal Access: Make Newton Centre Playground [path routes and surfaces, and recreation facilities] universally accessible as is required for compliance with state and federal regulations.

Pavement Materials: Use bituminous concrete for walks and drives inside the playground. This will reduce the ongoing maintenance requirements associated with gravel or crushed stone. Add a chip seal material over the bituminous concrete when funds allow. This treatment will provide a rustic historic appearance. This recommendation is made with the understanding that the city does not plow these walks free of snow because that activity would impair the appearance of chip seal. Maintain drives that are snow plowed in bituminous concrete.

Recreation Facilities
Tennis Courts: Maintain the existing courts. Replace the surrounding fence, practice court and backboard. The latter should have sound attenuating qualities to reduce the acoustic impact on neighbors. Lighting is not recommended because of the proximity to adjacent homes.

Basketball Court: Maintain the court as long as neighborhood use continues. Repair the court surface. Remove the lights.

Baseball and Soccer Fields: These facilities are well used and in excellent condition. No immediate recommendations are offered. Local Little League officials are currently satisfied with their field even though it is undersized.

Play Structure Area: This facility is scheduled for replacement in place in 2006 with private contributions. This new facility is to meet current ADA guidelines.

School Garden: Maintain the school garden at Mason-Rice School.

Archery: Do not replace archery facilities.

Toboggan Slide and Winter Sports: Maintain the existing sledding slopes, but do not replace the toboggan slide. Continue to provide temporary safety features at the bottom of slope to prevent accidents in the brook.

Buildings
Make the Recreation Center accessible. Defer accessibility improvements to the building until appropriate improvements are made inside the Recreation Center. Continue to provide periodic maintenance to the Recreation Center. No additional buildings should be added to the playground.

Public Safety and Vandalism
Vegetative management along the brooks and additional lighting in the playground is recommended to improve overall visibility, increase the perception of safety, help facilitate observation by police patrol and reduce vandalism. Increased police presence and enforcement is critical to change inappropriate activities and perceptions about the park.

Site Furnishings
Benches: Provide more benches throughout the playground, particularly in relation to passive recreation areas. Consideration should be given to selecting a city wide style of bench for Newton's historic parks to ease long term maintenance requirements for the city. As the existing benches of other styles deteriorate, they should be replaced.

Trash Receptacles: Provide these facilities to satisfy current public expectations. Receptacles should ideally be visually compatible with the character of other amenities in this historic open space.

Drinking Fountains: Replace existing drinking fountains with a universally accessible model that is visually compatible with the historic character of the playground.

Signs: Provide a new overall sign program consisting of identification, regulatory, orientation and interpretive signs to present a sense of uniformity and wholeness. The system should be designed to reflect the historic quality of the playground. Consideration should be given to developing a system that is appropriate for all of the historic parks in the city.

A new system of consistent and appropriate signs is recommended. Signs should be legible and visually compatible with the character of the grounds and an overall system to present a sense of uniformity and wholeness. The placement of signs inside the grounds should be coordinated with drive and path systems so that visitors naturally remain on path surfaces and are not attracted to walk on lawn surfaces.

Visible identification signs are needed, particularly at pedestrian entrances. The identification sign should provide some basic information like the date of establishment, at a minimum. Regulatory signs enumerating rules and regulations are critical to help resolve and control issues related to use. The placement of a supporting informational or interpretive sign system component is also recommended and would be very beneficial in assisting visitors understand the significance of this resource.

Memorials

There are no recommendations for existing memorials at this time. Recommendations pertaining to the issue of monuments, memorials and commemorative markers in the playground are included under Maintenance/Management.

Landscape Character

The landscape character that was envisioned by the Olmsted firm and others should be developed as much as possible with the addition of "natural beauty" and the removal of volunteer and invasive growth. After the removal of hazardous trees and pruning of trees to remain, trees should be replaced in general conformance with this overall plan which takes into account the intent of the Olmsted firm plan. Permanent plantings consisting primarily of shade trees should be interspersed in appropriate locations along pathways for shade. Provide additional vegetation throughout for shade, particularly in relation to the play structure area.

Provide street trees along perimeter streets, setting them on the playground side of the sidewalks to reduce interference with overhead wires in the right of way. Provide evergreen screening at neighboring back yards as suggested in the Kellaway plans.

Views and vistas should be restored wherever possible to maintain the sense of expanse and distance. Reduce the density of vegetation along the brooks, particularly Hammond Brook, to increase visual access to the brooks and the playground in general. Volunteer and invasive growth should be removed throughout the playground.

Shrubs and Horticultural Displays: A desire for more color and variety should be accomplished primarily with large and small trees. The use of shrubs and flowers should be limited to the capacity of the city to maintain them. Large perennial and flower beds are very labor intensive. Areas for the display of flowers should be limited to pedestrian entrances.

Walls and Fences

Walls: Eliminate the stone walls along one or both edges of Hammond Brook and the south end of the brook from Homer Street in conjunction with naturalizing the brooks as discussed under Storm Water Management. Repair and repoint the remaining stone walls and headwalls.

Fences: Provide 42" high vinyl coated chain link fences along Hammond Brook where walls are to remain. Provide a barrier rail along all public way frontage to restrict vehicular access and provide an appropriate public image for the playground. The rail should be of such a design that it does not collect trash. Remove the gates at Homer Street and Tyler Terrace when the barrier rail is installed. At pedestrian entrances provide gate posts as suggested in the Olmsted firm plan. Where necessary, provide bollards at pedestrian entrances and bridges for pedestrian use to prevent vehicular access. Fences for active recreation facilities should be as low as practical [4' maximum height preferred], vinyl coated and uniform in color, preferably black. Fences that serve no practical purpose should be removed.

Storm Water Management
Resolve the flooding issue downstream of the site to reduce the impact of providing flood storage capacity inside the playground. Naturalize the brooks in accordance with the intent of the Olmsted firm plan to reduce storm water velocity and increase infiltration. Provide new bridges over the brooks to facilitate improvements in accessibility and circulation. The style of the new bridges should be consistent with the intent of the Olmsted firm plan. That is they should have a style that is compatible with natural scenery. The 4 bridges to remain should be reconstructed in a similar style as such time as they need structural repairs. Existing deteriorated sections of the remaining channels should be repaired as soon as possible.

Utilize excess excavated material, including topsoil, from the various implementation projects to fill in depressions and erosion areas. Provide proper and ongoing maintenance to eliminate concentrated overland flows.

Infrastructure
Electric Service and Lighting: Provide a limited amount of general illumination inside the playground to increase the sense of safety, reduce vandalism and discourage other night time activities in the park. Given that the playground officially closes at dusk and is in a residential neighborhood, sports fields and courts should not be illuminated for night use.

Develop and follow a strategy to make lighting inside the playground more uniform and consistent in terms of poles and fixtures. Select a pole and fixture appropriate for use throughout Newton's historic parks. Light sources should be energy efficient, like color corrected mercury vapor, and they should be shielded so as not to impact abutters and reduce light pollution of the night sky. Replace all nonconforming fixtures.

Remove overhead wires and unnecessary utility poles in the park. Place required electric service underground.

Water Supply: In addition to upgrading drinking fountains, maintain water supply for lawn restoration, plant establishment and cleaning.

Sanitary Sewer: No changes are recommended.

Maintenance Management
Follow the guidelines recommended for the maintenance of the various landscape components that make up Newton Centre Playground. The playground would benefit most with 1 seasonal position during the 8 month busy season assuming outside vendors maintain their current responsibilities, exclusive of administrative staff.

Administrative Management
Friends Groups and Citizen Participation: Encourage the formation of a Friends Group for Newton Centre Playground.

Monuments, Memorials and Commemorative Markers: A restricted growth policy for new monuments, memorials and markers is recommended to encourage the prudent use of Newton Centre Playground's precious space. Establish a moratorium on new monuments, memorials and markers until an overall plan, preferably a citywide plan, for the placement of these items is developed and approved.

1897 view of Newton Centre Playground

Historic background

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Newton Centre Playground was created at a time when a public interest was shifting from passive parks to more active recreation facilities. The Newton Centre Improvement Association, promoters of the park, stated in their 1890 report that they were attempting to combine an ornamented ground with a playground. Newton Centre Playground was the first playground in the City of Newton and was the largest municipal public open space in the city at the time. The initial design was conceived by landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted & Co. in 1890 and refined into a preliminary plan in 1891. The firm had designed Charlesbank for Boston in 1887, the first open air gymnasium and exercise facility of its kind in a public park. The outdoor gymnasium for men at Charlesbank opened in 1889. The design for Newton Centre Playground was further developed by Herbert J. Kellaway utilizing principles established in the Olmsted firm plan.

The period of landscape significance and emphasis for Newton Centre Playground has been designated to be between 1890 when land for the playground had been acquired and 1915 when the Recreation Center was added to the site. This incorporates the last overall designed change to the park.

Outdoor gymnasium for men, Charlesbank, Boston, 1889 [City of Boston Annual Reports]

THE DESIGNERS

Frederick Law Olmsted [1822-1903] was the designer of Central Park in New York City and numerous other parks and park systems nationwide. The firm, Frederick Law Olmsted & Co., worked on Newton Centre Playground from 1890 to 1891. They also worked on about 3 dozen residential projects in Newton including the estate of Robert R. Bishop, beginning in 1886.

Herbert J. Kellaway [1867-1947], landscape architect, worked in Olmsted firm office from 1892 to 1906 prior to establishing his own firm. He lived in Newton and served as chairman of the planning board from 1930 to 1946. Some of his other work includes Winchester Civic Center, Merrymount Park and Faxon Field in Quincy and Hastings Park in Lexington, as well as a number of housing projects and a rose garden for Mrs. Henry Ford in Dearborn MI.

ORIGINAL DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

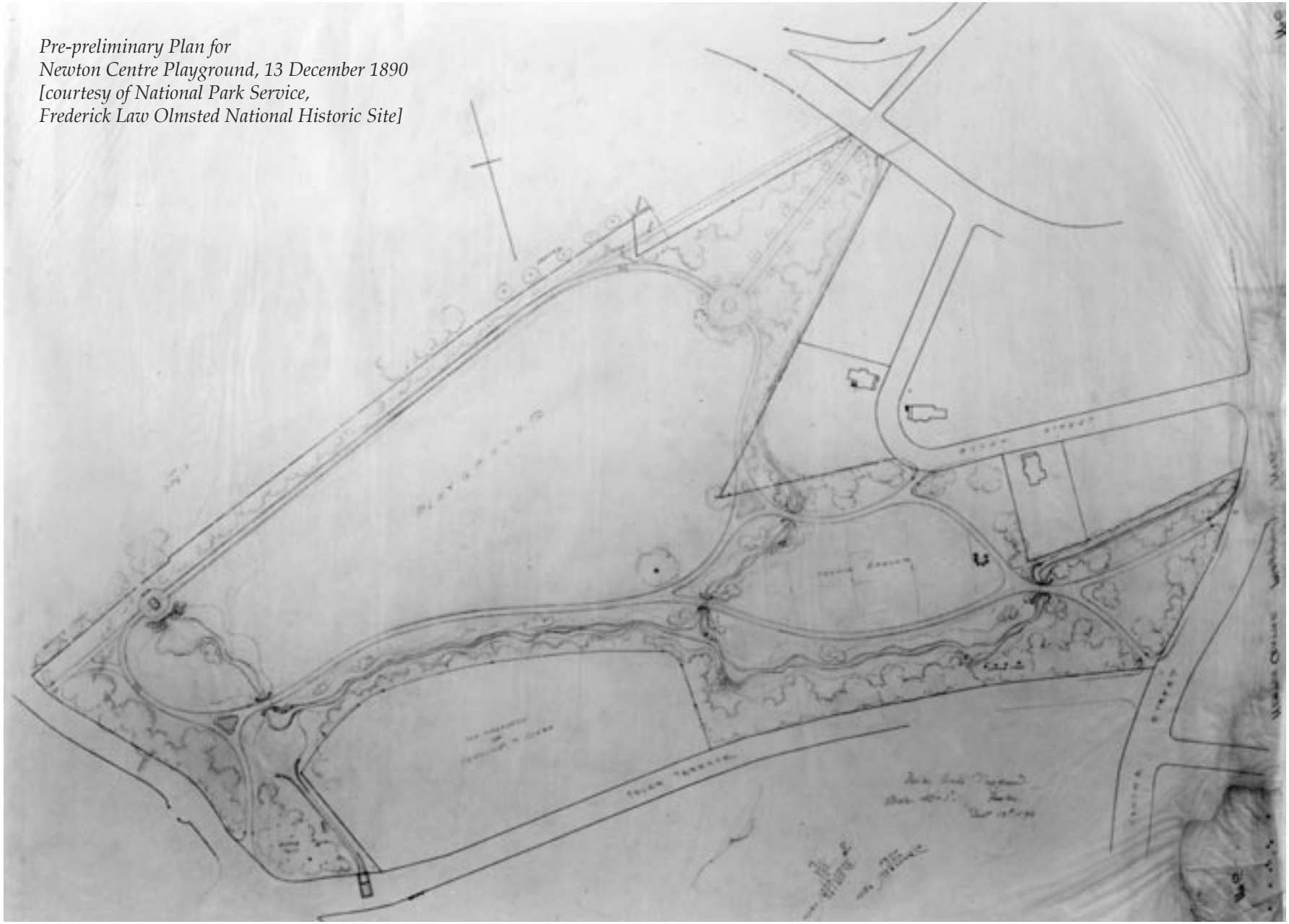
In their March 1891 preliminary plan, Frederick Law Olmsted & Co. envisioned a playground with a large central open space for a variety of activities [playground] in a broad expanse of lawn, a tennis ground, a complete interconnected circulation system with curvilinear paths at the perimeter of the property, brooks treated in a natural character [also relocated to maximize uninterrupted space] with 4 bridges, and vegetation to provide a natural character throughout. Entrances were flanked by gate posts. There were to be long walks from the entrances into the playground before encountering activity, allowing time for decompression from urban stress. There also appears to have been provision for special features where Hammond Brook passes under the Cochituate Aqueduct and at the walk connection from Homer Street and the loop path. The plan included a path along the top of the Cochituate Aqueduct with connections into the playground. Their description of the design proposal states:

The ground covered by this plan is a depressed area, much of it constantly water-soaked, subject to be flooded and unsuitable to be built upon. While in private hands and subject to transfer in small parcels, it was liable to become a public eyesore and a menace to the health of the community. Partly for this reason, and partly because it is well situated and well adapted to be economically formed into a much needed playground, possession of it has been acquired by the city. To adapt the ground to its intended use, it is proposed to establish a system of thorough underground drainage with a lower outlet than now exists. This system, however, is not intended to convey the water now flowing through the property in constant streams by open ditches. It is intended that this water shall be carried, so far as space is available, by channels having, as nearly as practicable, the character of natural brooks. In order to leave a large area of unbroken turf for ball games, these brook channels are to be laid out near the borders of the property. The existing walled ditch for carrying the waste water of the old aqueduct, near the western end of the property, is to be done away with where it crosses the meadow, the new brook channel being adapted to answer the same purpose.

From the straight walk shown on the drawing, following the line of the aqueduct, an unobstructed view of the ball ground will be commanded. Other walks shown are designed to be used for rambling, but are so laid out as to serve as means of convenient communication between the entrances, from public streets and different features of interest within the ground. Parts of the ground not needed for games and athletic exercises are to be treated with a view to securing as much beauty as practicable, of a natural character.

The Kellaway plans of 1908 and 1911 increasingly provided for active recreation of various types to satisfy community desires. The earlier plan generally follows the spirit of the Olmsted firm plan with a few modifications, most notably not relocating much of the brook or changing its character, relocating the tennis courts to the south, adding a playfield for small boys [or archery ground] at the Homer Street entrance, and subdividing the large central open space. A parcel at the corner of Pleasant Street and Tyler Terrace was also not included in this proposal. The written report for the plan describes recommendations for the playground with Olmsted ideals. The 1911 plan, while maintaining the basic concepts of circulation and perimeter vegetation, suggests an intensely developed playground for active recreation and recommends covering the brooks to allow the most usable space. It also recommended more active recreation along the Pleasant Street edge, eliminating another decompression zone.

The Olmsted initial plan attempted to provide a balance between the activities of the playground and calming qualities of the landscape. As the various Kellaway plans developed there was increasing interest in active recreation and less in passive recreation. Most of the later descriptions related to improvements focused on provision of active recreation facilities. There is very little description related to improvements for passive or aesthetic qualities after publication of the 1908 Kellaway plan.



Pre-preliminary Plan for
Newton Centre Playground, 13 December 1890
[courtesy of National Park Service,
Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site]

ESTABLISHMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN EVOLUTION OF NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

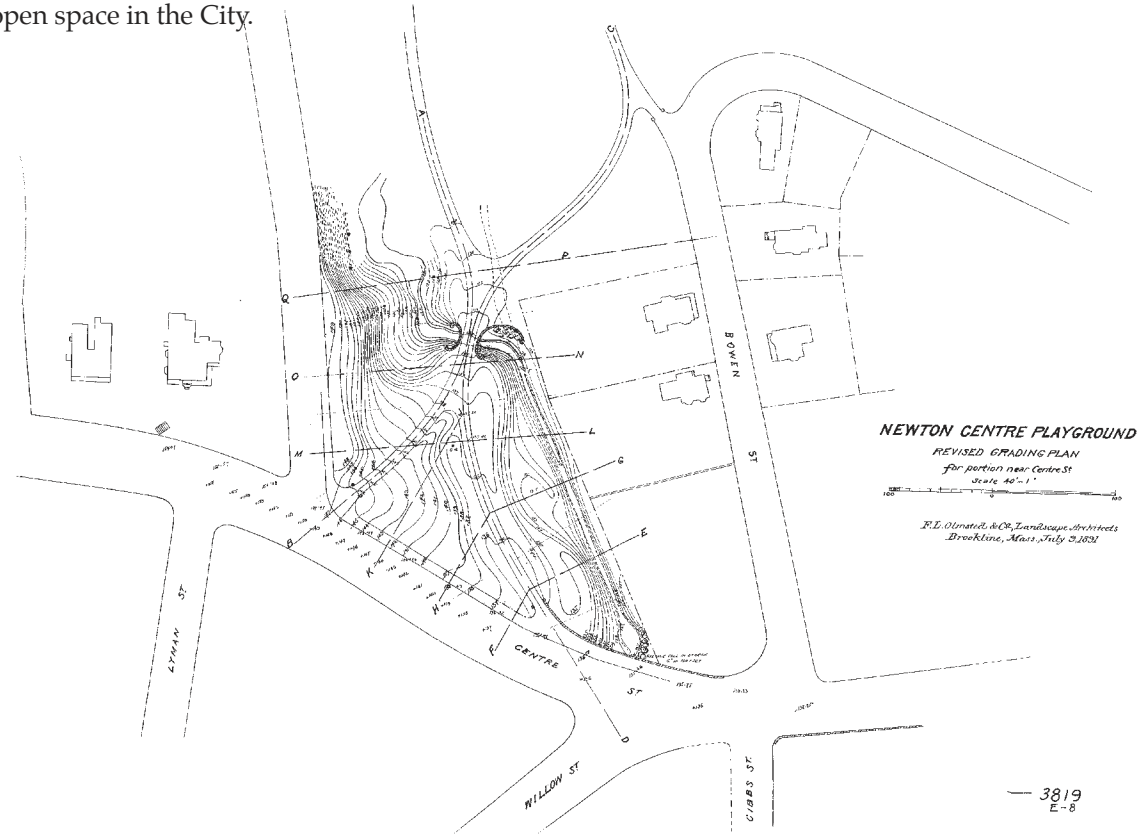
Pre World War I

In 1882 the Massachusetts Park Act became law, stating that a Park Commission is the only body authorized to acquire lands for park or playground purposes, for which appropriations have been made. Local papers provided commentary and opinion on this, and the City voted in favor of public parks. The following year Mayor William P. Ellison advocated securing land for parks while land was relatively inexpensive. Farlow Park was acquired as a gift to the City later that year, beginning a process of citizen involvement in the procurement and development of public open space in the City.

On April 9th of 1888 Robert R. Bishop presented an essay to the Neighbor's Club entitled *What can we do for Newton Centre* recommending the acquisition of about 11 acres in 7 parcels of land for a playground west of Centre Street. He described it as "a playground for games of ball and heavier sports, as well as for tennis courts and the lighter games, ample in size, proper in construction, centrally situated and yet so far away from houses so as to be unobjectionable". He also stated that the city had appropriated $2,500 toward the expense. Acquisition progressed shortly thereafter.

In the Newton Centre Improvement Association's final report in 1890 regarding a playground and park for Newton Centre, they recapped the process and stated that in 1888 they envisioned a park and playground of about 11 acres for a cost of about $15,000 and that they had secured about 20 acres for about $25,000. The citizens had contributed more than $15,000 and the city paid $10,000. They also stated that their attempt to "combine an ornamented ground with a playground" came from the character of the land and its location.

Recognizing that a playground and park still needed to be laid out, the Association retained the firm of Frederick Law Olmsted & Co. to develop a plan later that year. In addition to preparing a preliminary plan for the entire property, the firm also developed detailed plans for the Centre Street entrance.



Revised Plan for Centre Street entrance, July 1891 [courtesy of National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted national Historic Site]

Path from Tyler Terrace and Centre Street, 1905 [Postcard courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

The Olmsted firm seems to have been an obvious choice because they had designed the first playground, an open air gymnasium and exercise facility that was the first of its kind in a public park in 1887, Charlesbank in Boston. It was a linear park along the river with a promenade, boat landings, an open air gymnasium [running track, trapezes and swinging rings, jumping and pole vaulting, horizontal bars, pulley weights, giant strides, parallel bars, shot putting, weight throwing and quoits] at one end for men and a turf playground for little girls as well as gymnastic facilities [track, swings, ladders, pulley weights and giant strides] for women and a sand court for children at the other. Sandwiched between was a lawn with a large natural grove of trees. The men's area opened in 1889 and women's area opened 2 years later.

Progress in developing the park was relatively slow. Over the next 18 years comparatively little was accomplished according to Herbert J. Kellaway in his 1908 report. He noted that some underdrainage had been installed, 2 tennis courts and a 1/4 mile track had been built as well as a gravel drive. Little planting had been done except at the Centre Street entrance. He did not mention that the ball field had been also completed and that outdoor gymnastic facilities had been provided.

Kellaway's May 1908 plan was a revision of the Olmsted firm plan and reflected an increasing interest in accommodating active recreation in parks. His report provided some specifics related to his proposal for what was then the "largest open pleasure area in Newton". Although the Olmsted firm plan proposed moving Hammond Brook near southerly boundary to obtain large free open areas, Kellaway noted that a deeper channel had been constructed for quite a portion of the way with concrete sides and a stone bed. His plan was to only relocate the last [westernmost] section of the brook to the south and noted that it would need to be widened and deepened in the future to accommodate increasing development around Chestnut Hill.

At the Centre Street entrance he stated that the wide existing drive was never used and recommended reducing it to a walk with an 8' maximum width. Individual shrubs scattered about walks were to be removed to provide a simple lawn treatment. Old and overgrown shrub beds near entrance walks were to be replaced with younger growth of low growing edging shrubs on the margins of the beds. Perennials in the center of the lawn were to be moved to a margin of shrubbery. A 20' to 30' wide plantation of Pine and Hemlock was to be planted to screen the back yards from Centre Street. Native shrubs [Privet, Viburnum, Barberry and Wild Rose] were to be used along the margins of border plantations. The general effect was to be one of openness and neat simplicity.

Turf playground for little girls, Charlesbank, Boston, 1892 [City of Boston Annual Reports]

Ballfield from Cochituate Aqueduct, undated [courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

He believed that the tennis courts protruded "objectionably" into the landscape in the Bowen Street area. He recommended removal and replacement with a small playfield for boys, relocating the tennis courts, and providing more, to the opposite side of the brook at the base of the bank of Tyler Terrace, enclosed by a fence covered with vines and a mass of shrubs and a few trees to screen the gravel area from general park views. He suggested that athletic apparatus could be placed near this entrance.

At the Homer Street entrance he recommended developing a small play place with walks skirting the margins, removing a stone retaining wall, and extending the culvert for a better entranceway. He recommended that walks be a maximum width of 8', preferring 6', and that carriages could use the walks to attend games on the large field, if necessary.

The Pleasant Street edge was to have open spaces with plantations of shrubs and scattered trees permitting views into the playground. The brook in that area was to be moved to allow for a small space for boys and younger children. A border plantation was to be provided for the length of the field against the bank of the aqueduct, composed mostly of Pines with a few deciduous trees [Paper White Birch] on the margin with a mix of Sumac, Viburnum, Privet, Cornus and Common Elder for a pleasing natural effect. There were to be no yellow or purple leaved shrubs.

He felt the Playfield [running track, football field and baseball field] needed grading and further study of the levels for the track. He recommended that the backstop be made of open mesh wire, not boards.

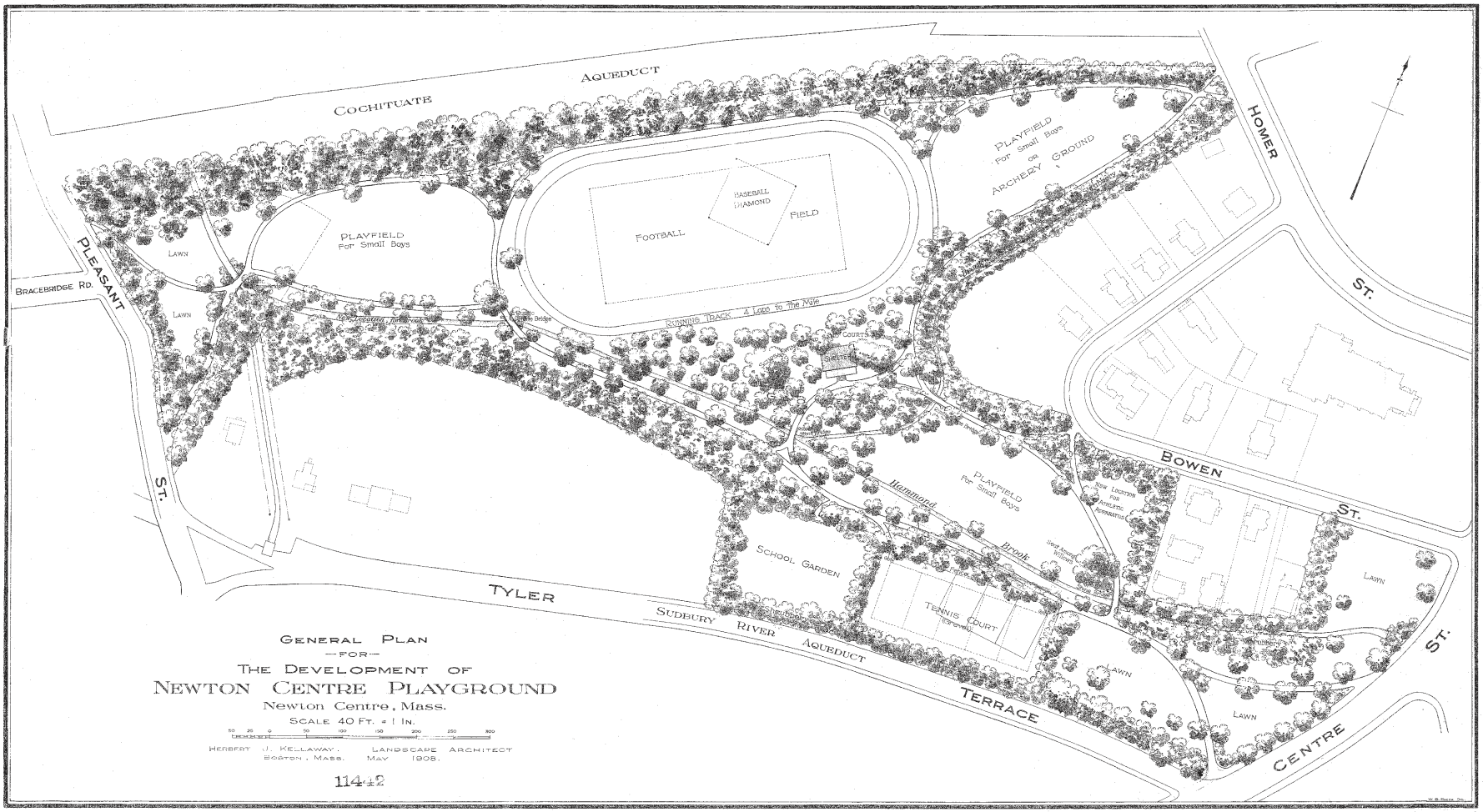
At the Grove and Shelter [which became known as the Childrens Corner] trees were to be added to secure the future of the grove. Seats, scups, sand courts, swings, drinking fountain and other amusements were to be added as well as a shelter in the center of all activities which would include sanitaries for both sexes and a space for protection from passing showers.

Rustic bridges were to be built of a permanent character with long wing walls and graceful lines. Vines and shrubs were to be planted to soften the stone work.

A school garden was to be provided to teach children how to grow plants. It was to have a fence enclosure covered with vines and with shrubs at the base. The steep bank along Tyler Terrace was to be planted with thorny shrubs to discourage boys from entering except through the gateway.

Childrens Corner, 1916
[courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

Tennis Courts, 1909-1913
[courtesy of Newton Historical Society]



General Plan for Newton Centre Playground, May 1908 [courtesy of City of Newton]

Planting was to be initiated as soon as possible. Shrubs were to be used in masses and allowed to grow naturally to reduce maintenance. Isolated shrubs were to be avoided. Ornamental shrubs [Spiraea, Honeysuckle, Deutzia and Forsythia] could be used near entrances.

In regard to maintenance, he felt that police presence was desirable.

The Kellaway 1911 plan design reflected the increased desires of the public for specific areas for sports and exercise. Even though more land was available for playground use, the brook was to be covered to create space for larger and additional play areas. Separate courts for girls and boys basketball were added. The plan proposed moving the children's area from the grove in the center of the site to the edge of Tyler Terrace with an open lawn and various amusements at the edge [sand boxes, scups, merry go round, wading pool, etc.]. It also proposed moving the school garden to a new location. The plan added 4 new tennis courts [for a total of 9] near Pleasant Street. Two buildings were also part of the plan, a cottage near Pleasant Street, and a shelter and natatorium [indoor pool] at the midpoint of Tyler Terrace.

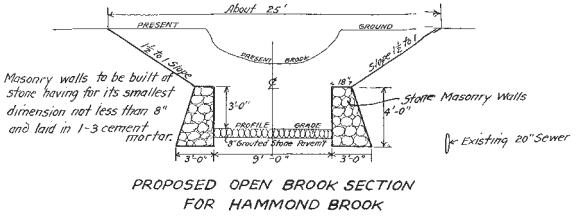
World War I and the Depression

Before the United States entered World War I the Newton Centre Improvement Association, Playground and Social Service League, and Newton Centre Woman's Club met in April and May of 1915 to raise money for moving and equipping the Trinity Parish building. Kellaway sited the building in the park. A convenience station was added to the playground in 1916.

The toboggan slide was added in 1929. Fencing for the tennis courts and some boundaries was added in 1931. Work on the brooks commenced in 1938. Stone masonry walls enclosed a grouted stone waterway that was set deeper than the existing brook. The junction of the 2 brooks was realigned and a portion of Hammond Brook adjacent to the tennis courts was covered at the same time.

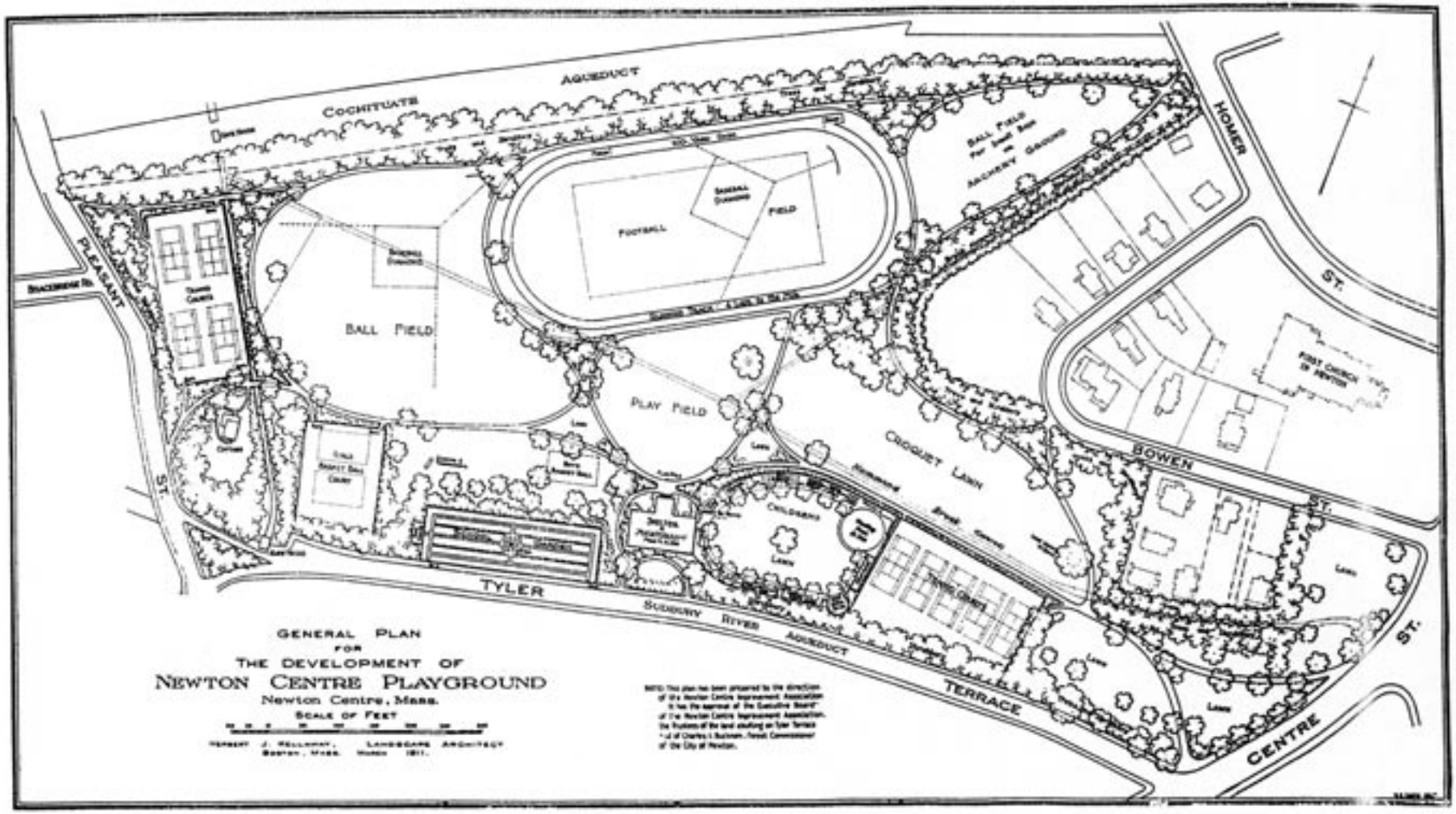
Toboggan slide, undated
[courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

Detail at Hammond Brook, 1938
[courtesy of City of Newton]



PROPOSED OPEN BROOK SECTION
FOR HAMMOND BROOK

Toboggan slide, undated
[courtesy of Newton Historical Society]



General Plan for Newton Centre Playground, March 1911 [courtesy of City of Newton]

World War II and Later

During World War II concrete steps were on the Tyler Terrace slope next to the tennis courts in 1943 and Victory gardens were added along the Pleasant Street edge in 1945. Few improvements other than repairs were made until 1957. In anticipation of the construction of the Mason-Rice School at the Pleasant Street end of the site, the archery range was relocated, the school garden and the running track was removed, and the baseball field was improved.

A merry go round was installed in 1962. The tennis courts were resurfaced the following year. The Little League field was refurbished over the next 2 years. A new tot lot area was installed in 1965. A practice tennis court was installed in 1966 and an asphalt basketball court was added the following year. Lights were added for football in 1972. The toboggan slide was removed in 1978. A play structure area was added to the Mason-Rice School in 1989. Lighting was added to the basketball court in 1995.

REMAINING HISTORIC FEATURES

The playground retains features from both the original Olmsted firm plan and Kellaway plans. Although the equipment has changed, the baseball field and play apparatus area are in their original location as are the Recreation Center and path system from Centre Street to the tennis courts. The latter did not include construction of pedestrian gate posts, the bridge or relocating the brook. While the tennis courts are not in their original location, they are where they were sited in Kellaway's 1908 plan. The Recreation Center retains much of its original character.

The Centre Street edge was always intended as a passive space, but the area north of Hammond Brook adjacent to Centre Street was apparently not developed as described in the 1908 Kellaway plan. The playground has always had the most frontage on Tyler Terrace, but little presence because most activities occur well below street level. The 1911 Kellaway plan proposed facilities in closer proximity to adjacent residences, as did the addition of the toboggan slide which is now gone.

CHANGES TO THE ORIGINAL PLAN

Aspects of the historic plans were never implemented, particularly in relation to circulation systems and the placement and treatment of the brooks. With few exceptions, planting was not developed or completed. Apparently only a general approach was proposed and a specific planting plan does not appear to have been developed. In recent years there appears to have been a general loss of vegetation, specifically the loss of the Willows along Hammond Brook, and loss of the separation between use areas like the play structure area and ball fields. Volunteer growth related to the brooks tends to conceal that feature of the playground.

While loss of the running track is not a significant issue, construction of the Mason-Rice School on park land was a major intrusion resulting in the loss of playground space and connections to the neighborhood at the west end of playground. While the activities of the Little League field and basketball court are appropriate, their locations are not. Kellaway suggested playfields for small boys near the Homer and Bowen Street entrances that would have included a flexible open space of lawn accommodating a variety of uses. The Little League field has a defined single purpose use, has a fenced enclosure which was not anticipated, and barely fits into its site. The fenced enclosure, which was not anticipated in the early plans, blocks the entrance to the playground from Homer Street. The basketball court also has a single purpose use and protrudes "objectionably" into the landscape much as the original tennis courts did in that location as noted by Kellaway.

Teeters, undated
[courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

Existing Conditions
Accessibility and Rehabilitation Plan

NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

City of Newton Parks and Recreation Department
Newton, Massachusetts

NEWTON
Parks & Recreation

Walker-Kluesing Design Group
Bellalta 3 Design
Judith Nitsch Engineering, Inc.
January 26, 2006
scale: 1" = 60'

Childrens Corner, 2005

Existing Conditions and Recommendations

ACCESS, CIRCULATION AND PARKING

Vehicular Access and Circulation

Background

The initial Olmsted firm work included paths that had 10′ and 16′ widths. In 1893 the Newton Centre Improvement Association recommended widening the walk at the Centre Street end of the playground to 20′. In 1908 Kellaway stated that the wide existing drive from Centre Street was never used and recommended that it be reduced to a maximum width of 8′. He also recommended that the path from Homer Street be a maximum of 8′ wide, preferring 6′. If demand required, the walk could be widened. The Homer Street entrance and service roadway was rebuilt and blacktopped in 1951.

Assessment

On the perimeter of the site, Centre Street is a main north-south thoroughfare and Homer Street is a main east-west thoroughfare. Tyler Terrace, Bowen Street and Willow Terrace are residential streets. Tyler Terrace has 5 speed bumps. Bowen Street is one way from Centre Street and Willow Terrace is a dead end street. With construction of Mason-Rice School, the playground no longer fronts on Pleasant Street.

Path from Tyler Terrace and Centre Street, c1918 [postcard courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

Vehicular circulation inside the park is limited to authorized vehicles. There are 4 points of vehicular access: Centre Street, Homer Street and 2 on Tyler Terrace [the one to the Recreation Center is used informally]. The route from Centre Street remains about 10′ wide to the tennis courts while the one from Homer Street is about 6′ wide and gated. Tracks in the ground indicate that vehicles go around the gate for access and egress. On Tyler Terrace the main vehicular access drive is 12 to 16′ wide until it crosses the brook and then the width diminishes to about 8′. The gravel drive to the Recreation Center is about 20′ wide. All have defined curb cuts except the one to the Recreation Center.

Emergency services [ambulances] typically enter from Centre Street. Park maintenance vehicles typically enter from Tyler Terrace as does the occasional police patrol. That entrance also serves as the service drive for Mason-Rice School and is the only drive that is cleared to snow.

Parking

Background

No historic description of parking in the park has been found. In Kellaway's 1908 report, he noted that carriages could use the walks to attend games on the large field if necessary, implying that there was informal acceptance of vehicles inside the park at that time. This implication is reinforced by 2 historic photographs from the 1930s that show parked vehicles below the Recreation Center.

A sidewalk was added along the edge of Bowen Street in the late 1980s to discourage angular parking and the resulting lawn deterioration. Installation of the walk resulted in steep adjacent side slopes.

Assessment

While there are no facilities for parking inside the park, stationary private vehicles have been observed. There is a limited amount of on street parking available adjacent to the park. Parking is allowed on the park sides of Tyler Terrace [2 hour limit from 7 AM to 7 PM except Sundays and holidays and no parking from 10 PM to 6 AM] and Bowen Street [2 hour limit from 9 Am to 5 PM except Sundays and holidays]. No parking is allowed on the Homer Street park frontage although parking is allowed on both sides of the street otherwise. No parking is allowed on the park side of Willow Terrace. There are parking facilities at Mason Rice School including 3 handicap spaces. It has been reported that the handicap spaces are mostly unused at all times.

There is a perceived need for additional parking facilities particularly for ball games and other events. It has been reported that Homer Street becomes quite dangerous during ball games due to parking activities on the street.

Homer Street entrance, 2006

Parking in the playground, undated
[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

Pedestrian Access and Circulation

Background

In 1892 the City Engineer set lines and grades for laying out paths and grading at the request of the Newton Center Improvement Association following the Olmsted firm plan for the Centre Street end of the park. After adjusting the alignment to make the grade easier, the Association extended that path along the north side of the tennis courts in 1898. They also built a low fence to protect the path at the southwest entrance of the park on Centre Street. There is no further mention of walks until new cement steps were installed from Tyler Terrace to the tennis courts in 1942.

Assessment

The pedestrian circulation system is incomplete and limited. Paths bring people into the park from numerous locations but do not connect and often end for no apparent reason. There is a narrow dirt path along the top of the Cochituate Aqueduct and numerous connections into the park. Other than those used for vehicular access, most paths are 4 to 6' wide. The Olmsted firm preliminary plan suggested gate posts at each entrance, but there is no evidence that any were installed. Paths are not cleared of snow.

Potential links to other areas or systems, like Newton Centre, MWRA land on the other side of Centre Street and aqueduct trails, have not been developed.

Universal Access

Background

There is no mention of universal access related to the park until a plan for handicap access improvement related to Bowen Street was prepared in August 2005. Implementation has been deferred.

Assessment

Universal accessibility inside the park without a vehicle is limited. The only acceptable accessible pedestrian route is the paved path from Centre Street to the tennis courts. It is relatively level for most of its length and has a gradient of about 4% above the bridge. Other routes have the following maximum gradients: about 8% on the path from the Centre Street and Tyler Terrace intersection; about 10% on the path from the bridge to Bowen Street; about 15% on the path from Bowen Street to the southwest which is also incomplete; about 13% on the path from Homer Street to the Little League field; about 17% with steps on the path from the Recreation Center to the play structure area; and about 10% on the path/drive from Tyler Terrace to the ball fields.

The only recreation facility that has an accessible route to it is the tennis courts. The Recreation Center is not universally accessible. There are exterior steps at the entrances facing Tyler Terrace and surrounding gradients are too steep for access to the entrances facing Hammond Brook.

Paving Materials

Background

The initial paving material was gravel. In 1908 a coal tar concrete walk was laid from the junction of Centre Street and Tyler Terrace, via the new bridge, to the elbow in Bowen Street. Given the steepness of the gradients on that walk, it is likely that this change was made to reduce the maintenance requirements of gravel on a slope. Concrete steps were installed from Tyler Terrace to the tennis courts in 1943.

Assessment

Circulation routes today are primarily either bituminous concrete or gravel. There is a concrete stairway to the tennis courts from Tyler Terrace, a concrete stair and concrete risers on a stepped ramp at the path north and east of the Recreation Center, and remnants of stone steps near one of the bridges over Hammond Brook.

The concrete stair and concrete risers on a stepped ramp at the Recreation Center are in poor condition. While there is a handrail along the stepped ramp, there is no handrail at the stair. The concrete stair near the tennis courts is in good condition with a few chipped treads. It has a galvanized steel pipe handrail.

Objectives

To strengthen the interconnected network of pedestrian circulation systems based upon the principles established in the Kellaway and Olmsted firm plans.

To develop and maintain adequate visitor and maintenance access to the park.

To meet current accessibility standards while restoring historic image.

To maintain the historic style of pavement materials.

To take advantage of the views and vistas in the park.

To restore the relationship between scenery, service and circulation while creating a clear separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic where possible.

To control traffic and parking in the park by providing adequate, accessible, visible parking areas at locations that are close to major activity areas.

Path from Bowen Street, 2005

Recommendations

Vehicular Circulation

Provide 12' minimum paved width emergency/service vehicle routes to provide access to each of the major recreation facilities in the playground. Maintain the Centre Street entrance for emergency/service vehicular use and restrict vehicular access into the playground from Tyler Terrace, Homer Street and Bowen Street. Maintain service access to Mason-Rice School from Tyler Terrace and reconfigure the intersection near the play structures to discourage vehicles from driving toward Hammond Brook.

Parking

Continue to make use of on street parking without providing parking facilities inside the playground. Utilize the Mason-Rice School parking lot to provide additional parking for the playground. This should increase use of the lot particularly during those hours when the school is closed and playground demand peaks. Restripe the current handicap parking layout in the lot to meet current standards and facilitate vehicular access for emergency/service vehicles. Monitor the use of these spaces after the addition of the new play structure area and provide additional spaces if deemed necessary. Designate on street handicap parking with 2 spaces each at Homer Street, Bowen Street and Tyler Terrace.

Pedestrian Circulation

Provide a complete interconnected pedestrian circulation system serving playground entrances and recreation facilities. This will assist in completing links to other areas and trails outside the playground.

Walks should retain a generous width as is appropriate from a historic and use perspective. Provide 6' minimum paved width for pedestrian routes. Insure that walk locations work with the topography to eliminate the need for steps where possible.

At the Recreation Center, repair the stepped ramp on the east side of the building and remove the steps and path below. The latter is dangerous and infrequently used.

Universal Access

Making Newton Centre Playground [path surfaces and facilities] universally accessible is required for compliance with state and federal regulations. All of the main pedestrian entrances can and should be made accessible except for the path into the playground from the intersection of Centre Street and Tyler Terrace which is too steep.

Paving Materials

Consideration must be given to the historic and visual appropriateness of pavement materials as well as initial and long term cost and maintenance implications. The use of gravel, cinders or ashes, while appropriate historically, is not suited for use on slopes without an excessive amount of maintenance.

The use of a chip seal material over bituminous concrete is recommended on walks inside the park. This treatment will provide a rustic historic appearance and will reduce the ongoing maintenance requirements associated with gravel or crushed stone. This recommendation is made with the understanding that the city does not plow these walks free of snow because that activity would impair the appearance of chip seal. Maintain drives that are snow plowed in bituminous concrete. Should funding be an issue, paved routes could be installed with bituminous concrete initially to facilitate implementation. A chip seal could be added when sufficient funds are available.

Chip seal surface over bituminous concrete
Doherty Playground, Charlestown MA

RECREATION FACILITIES

Tennis Courts

Background

The 1891 Olmsted firm plan identified space for a tennis ground. While they but didn't specifically site courts, there are some indications of locations for courts on their 1890 sketch plan. Some courts were built and in 1895 the Newton Centre Improvement Association equipped them with nets, tape, etc., and cared for them. In 1898 the Association enclosed them with wire netting.

A 1908 plan of the existing conditions showed that 5 tennis courts had been built, 3 where they are now and 2 on the north side of the brook. The same year Kellaway noted that only 2 had been built and that they protruded "objectionably" into the landscape and recommended that they be relocated to the opposite side of the brook at the base of the bank of Tyler Terrace and be enclosed by a fence covered with vines and a mass of shrubs and a few trees to screen the gravel area from general park views. Apparently the 3 additional tennis courts had been installed before Kellaway had completed his plan. His 1908 plan indicates 5 tennis courts where they are now.

The 1911 Kellaway plan included the 5 tennis courts he had previously recommended with an additional 4 tennis courts near Pleasant Street. The latter were not constructed. Later that year a set of tennis register boards was erected and tennis tape was relaid. Two new tennis courts were built in 1912, presumably completing the bank of 5 courts seen today.

In 1930 an appropriation was made for a fence around the tennis courts. There were 3,482 permits issued for use of the courts in 1932, the most for any park in the city. The tennis backstops were repaired in 1947. A special redcoat surfacing was installed on the courts by the Recreation Department in 1962 to allow the courts to be used much sooner after a rain. The practice court and backboard was installed in 1965. Renovation of the clay courts began in 1989.

Assessment

There are currently 5 Har-Tru courts in the location recommended by Kellaway in 1908 with a practice court and backboard at the west end of the courts. As the only municipal clay courts in the city, they are heavily used and in good condition. The asphalt practice court is uneven and cracked. Constructed with plywood that is in poor condition, noise from use of the practice backboard can be heard by nearby residences. A sign indicates that use is not to commence before 9 AM. The courts are unlighted and open from May 1 to October 31, from 9 AM to 2 PM and 4 PM to 8 PM.

Tennis players have expressed a desire for lighting to extend the available hours of play and for a small pro shop.

Basketball Court

Background

At the site of the current basketball court, Kellaway recommended removal of the tennis courts and replacement with a playfield for small boys in 1908. His 1911 plan recommended a croquet lawn for the same area with basketball courts sited further west. There was to be 1 court for boys and 2 courts for girls. At least one court was built about this time with a turf surface. A basketball court was added to the playground in 1947. A new asphalt basketball court was added in 1966 and seal coated in 1992. It was repaired and lighting was added in 1995.

Assessment

There is one illuminated asphalt basketball court with aluminum bleachers north of the tennis courts. The pavement has several cracks and there is erosion along the brook edge. The lights have not been used for several years and the bleachers are scheduled for relocation to another park in the Spring of 2006. Leagues have died out and the court is not used for that purpose anymore.

Basketball court, c1909
[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

Baseball Fields

Background

As one of the first improvements to the playground, work began on a temporary ball field near Homer Street in 1890. The following year the ball field had been drained and leveled and was to be seeded in 1892. The following year a 1/4 mile running track was prepared for the 4th of July celebration. A dressing room was built at the running track in 1898.

The 1908 Kellaway plan indicated a baseball diamond and football field inside the 1/4 mile track. He also stated that the area needed grading and that the levels for the track should be studied. He also recommended that the backstop be constructed of open mesh wire, not boards. In 1910 a second baseball diamond was laid out for smaller boys, presumably in one of the 3 areas identified as playfields for small boys. In the 1911 Kellaway plan a second baseball diamond was shown west of the existing one.

The playground was noted as having a baseball diamond, softball diamond and cricket in 1940. With the planned construction of the Mason Rice School, improvements were made to other facilities in the playground in 1956. The running track was removed as it was little used then, had been built above the level of the athletic field and was considered hazardous to baseball. Also in poor condition, the baseball diamond and infield was regraded and rebuilt to the standards of the time.

While it is not clear at this time when the Little League field was built, the Newton East Little League field was given a heavy topdressing and reseeded in 1963. After receiving protective fencing in 1964, the little league field was enclosed in chain link fencing in 1967 and dedicated as Jay Gordon Field on 21 April 1991.

Assessment

The playground currently contains a baseball field and a Little League field. The baseball field is in the same location as originally sited and has no defined limit to the outfield. It has a chain link backstop that is in good condition. Both have aluminum bleachers, team benches and a batting cage with fabric netting between the fields that are also in good condition.

The Little League field has a chain link fenced enclosure and backstop. The field and enclosure are in excellent condition. The field is undersized with the outfield fence 180' from home plate. The current standard is 200'. In March of this year the home of the Little League World Series began the process of expanding that distance to 225'. The Little League field barely fits into its current site and makes access to other facilities from Homer Street difficult. It has been reported that balls have been found in the backyards of residential neighbors.

Soccer Field

Background

While not separately identified as a specific application in historic plans, soccer is an appropriate playground use and it has been sited in an area established for that use.

Assessment

In fair condition, this area is used as an informal practice field as well for volleyball. Dog owners also use the area.

Little League field, 2005

Soccer field, 2005

Play Structure Area

Background

Although a specific area for this element was not identified in the Olmsted firm plan, following the precedent set by Charlesbank in Boston, the Newton Centre Improvement Association installed an open air gymnasium in 1898. According to the *Tercentenary History of Newton*, new swings, sand boxes and equipment for sports were provided in 1902.

The 1908 Kellaway plan indicated a play area in the "center of all activities" near the intersection of the brooks with seats, scups, swings, sand courts, drinking fountain and other amusements among the trees of a grove for mothers and children. He also recommended a shelter with "sanitaries" for both sexes and hall space for protection from passing showers. Additional swings were provided in 1910.

The 1911 Kellaway plan suggested a new location for this activity, the area between the tennis courts and proposed Recreation Center [shelter and natatorium] with sand boxes, scups, merry go round, wading pool and other facilities. This relocation apparently did not occur. A platform for children's games was built the same year.

An outdoor stage was created for the Tercentenary pageant in 1930 leading to a recommendation for a permanent stage [outdoor auditorium of rising grass terraces] for outdoor pageantry, drama and music festivals. A plan from 1930 indicates 6 sand boxes, 2 swings, a tilt and a platform in the area of the current play structure area. Apparently a permanent stage was not developed.

The 1941 annual report lists swings, slides, sand boxes and teeters as existing elements. The 1948 annual report was amended to include a jungle gym as well as the previous facilities. A new merry-go-round was installed in 1961, followed by a new tot lot play area with the "latest imaginative apparatus" in 1964. A playground was added at the Mason Rice School in 1989. A galvanized steel jungle gym was removed in 2005 and a plan for universally accessible apparatus was prepared, but not implemented.

Play structure area, 2005

Assessment

A play structure area is located in the center of the park where the 1908 Kellaway plan suggested it be placed. It is likely that apparatus had already been placed in that area by that time. Although centrally located and near other facilities, in many respects it is the most remote facility related to accessibility. There is also a play structure area at the Mason-Rice School, a portion of which extends into the park. The school play apparatus area was not examined or evaluated.

Apparatus in the play structure area, which is about 1/2 acre in size, includes 2 swing sets with 4 belt type seats each, 1 swing set with 2 toddler bucket type seats, 2 pieces of climbing apparatus [one of wood and one of metal, each with plastic slide components], a wood "car" and a wood balance beam. All are in good to fair condition although there have been complaints of splinters related to the wood apparatus. A concrete pad has been reported at the base of one of the slides. Most of the apparatus appears to have been selected for preschool and early elementary school use. The ground surface is sand in and around each piece of apparatus with turf in between.

While safety zones between each piece of equipment appear to be sufficient, sand is not an accessible surface nor is it appropriate as an impact attenuating material. Current apparatus is not compliant with the 2002 Guidelines for Play Areas prepared by the Access Board of the ADA. Additions or alterations to the apparatus should comply with these guidelines.

School Garden

Background

The 1908 Kellaway plan included a school garden to teach children how to grow plants. He recommended a level area west of the tennis courts with a fence enclosure covered with vines, and with shrubs at the base of the fence. The adjacent steep bank along Tyler Terrace was to be planted with thorny shrubs to discourage boys from entering anywhere except through the gateway. The 1911 Kellaway plan shifted the recommended location to a position west of the Recreation Center. 32 victory gardens were added to the list of outdoor facilities in the 1945 annual report. It has been reported that they were located along the Pleasant Street edge.

With the planned construction of Mason Rice School, the garden was removed in 1956. It had excellent loam with an average depth of 3 to 4 feet. Approximately 4,000 cubic yards of loam were removed and stockpiled for use in other improvements to the playground. After it was removed, fill from Cleveland Street is used to raise the level of former garden area, 8" of loam was placed on top and the area was graded and seeded.

Assessment

A school garden at the base of the slope below Tyler Terrace was relocated with construction of the Mason-Rice School to a site between the new school and Hammond Brook.

Archery

Background

Both the 1908 and 1911 Kellaway plans indicated the potential of placing an archery ground near Homer Street. Due to a revival of interest in archery, a range was measured off and leveled, and targets were purchased for use in the fall of 1910. In 1933 archery was only being offered at Newton Centre Playground and permits numbered 52 for weekdays and 8 for Sundays. In 1940 the Newton Archery Club had approximately 300 competing in tournaments on the archery range.

With the planned construction of Mason Rice School on the site of the archery range, it had to be relocated in 1956. The following year the Recreation Department built an archery hut from available salvaged or second hand lumber and the Newton Archers furnished the finish lumber. Hoping to spark a revival of the Newton Archers, weekly children's archery classes began in 1962.

Assessment

Evidence of either former archery range is no longer present, but archery classes are still held in the Recreation Center.

Archery hut, undated
[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

Toboggan Slide and Winter Sports

Background

Interested in providing winter skating in the playground, the Park Committee of the Newton Centre Improvement Association asked the city to consider the matter. In 1898 they reported that the City Engineer and Superintendent of Streets had stated that it would be impossible to provide skating in the park due to nature of soil. Later that year the Parks and Grounds Committee reported that flooding for skating had been tried anyway and it had not worked. The next year the Park Committee reported that a dike had been built to a flood portion of the playground for skating. In 1901 the Newton Centre Improvement Association voted to authorize $100 for flooding.

Toboggan slide, January 1938
[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

In 1929 an appropriation of $500 was made for a toboggan slide and there is an untitled plan for the slide dated 1930. It was described as having 2 runs that were 6' wide and 350' long, extending from Tyler Terrace across the brook into the current soccer field. The most days the slides were used was 37 between December 16 and March 2 as noted in the 1934 annual report, although it was described as very active in the 1948 annual report. With only 13 days of tobogganing, there was a recorded attendance of 9,398 noted in the 1958 annual report. The toboggan slide was dismantled in 1978 with no plans for replacement.

Assessment

There is no remaining evidence of the former toboggan slide or skating area. Unsupervised sledding activities remain active on the slope west of the Recreation Center and on the slope from Bowen Street. The City provides some temporary protection along the edge of Hammond Brook during the sledding season.

Objectives

To maintain and enhance active and passive recreation opportunities.

To recreate the historic landscape as much as possible without compromising today's recreation needs.

To relocate or remove inappropriate facilities from sensitive areas.

Recommendations

Tennis Courts

Maintain the existing courts. Replace the surrounding fence, practice court and backboard. The latter should have sound attenuating qualities to reduce the acoustic impact on neighbors. Lighting is not recommended because of the proximity to adjacent homes. With two storage structures adjacent to the courts, another structure is not recommended.

Basketball Court

Maintain the court as long as neighborhood use continues. Repair the court surface. Remove the lights.

Baseball and Soccer Fields

These facilities are well used and in excellent condition. No immediate recommendations are offered. Little League officials are currently satisfied with their field even though it is undersized.

Play Structure Area

With private contributions, this facility is scheduled for replacement in place in 2006. While the selection of the site was completed and approved prior to the initiation of this plan, the play structures are being placed in a historically appropriate location even though it is remote from perimeter access points.

This new facility is to meet current ADA guidelines and consist of ground level and elevated play components, ramps and transition systems. An accessible route will be provided and the surface inside the play structure area is to be accessible, firm, stable and slip resistant in accordance with ASTM F1951. Impact attenuated surfaces beneath and immediately adjacent to play structures are to be provided in accordance with ASTM F1292. The playground equipment for public use is to meet the requirements of ASTM F1487.

While the specific details of this replacement facility have not been examined, from a historic perspective, play equipment components inside the park should be metal with recessive colors. The use of primary colors, and roofs that would attract too much attention to themselves is discouraged. While wood might also be an appropriate material choice for some of the new equipment from a historic perspective, it is not recommended because it is less durable and has higher maintenance requirements.

School Garden

Maintain the school garden at Mason-Rice School.

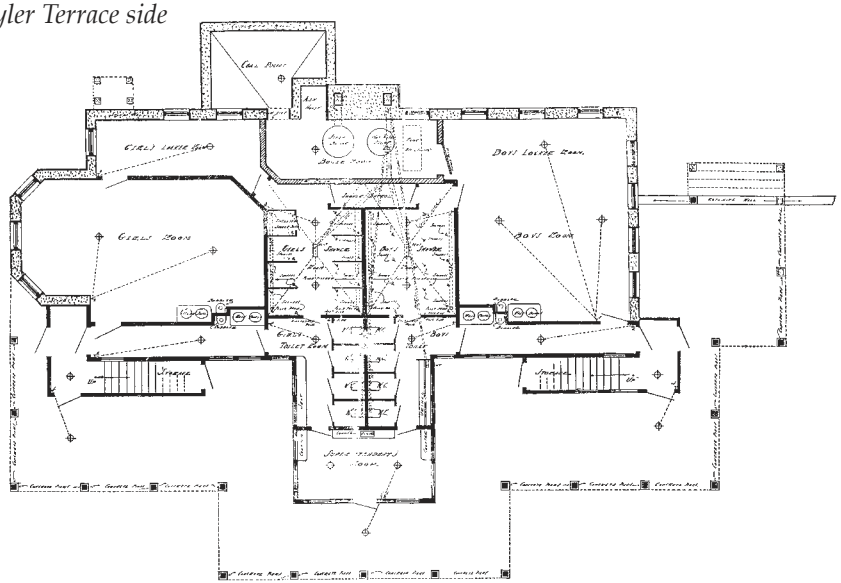
Archery

Do not replace archery facilities.

Toboggan Slide and Winter Sports

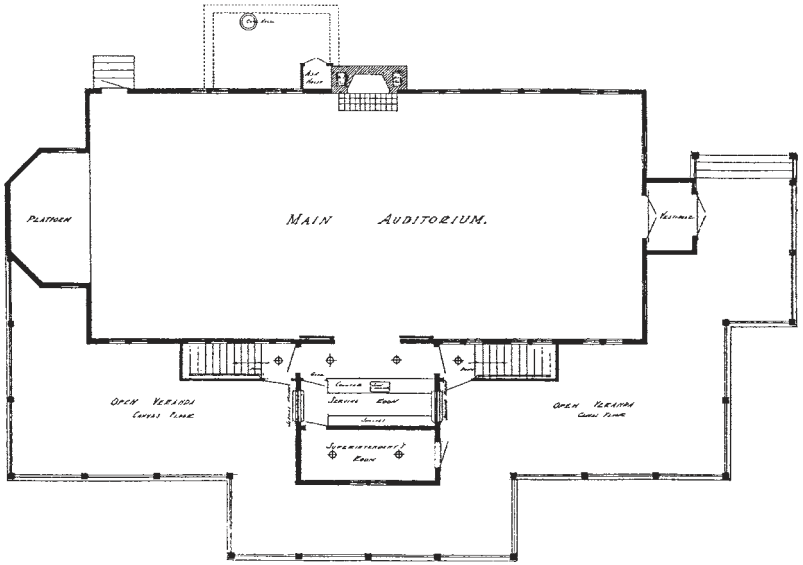
Maintain the existing sledding slopes, but do not replace the toboggan slide. Continue to provide temporary safety features at the bottom of slope to prevent accidents in the brook.

Tyler Terrace side



Hammond Brook side

FLOOR PLAN—PLAYGROUND LEVEL



AUDITORIUM LEVEL

ELEVATION

North Elevation

Floor plans and elevation of Recreation Center, 1915 [Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

BUILDINGS

Background

The 1891 Olmsted firm plan did not include any buildings. The 1908 Kellaway plan proposed a shelter with "sanitaries" for both sexes in the play structure area. A combined shelter and natatorium was proposed in the 1911 Kellaway plan on the site of the current Recreation Center. Kellaway later sited the building there when the original Trinity Church building was moved to this site at the time the new Trinity Church was built on Centre Street. In 1915 the upper level of the renovated building was planned to have an auditorium seating about 300 people with a stage at one end and a fireplace on the other with an adjacent serving room and superintendent's room, and an exterior open veranda. The lower level was planned to have separate boys and girls rooms with lockers, showers and toilets, and a large exterior sheltered space beneath a balcony piazza. Near the intersection of Pleasant Street and Tyler Terrace, the 1911 plan also included a cottage that had been on part of the acquired land for the playground. While the use of that structure was not defined, it is likely to have been intended for an on site caretaker as was a common practice at that time and was reported to have been used as such.

The Recreation Center was reconditioned in 1940 and renovated in 1992 with new ceilings, floors, paint and a heating system. If the cottage remained as part of the playground, it was reported to have been removed with construction of the Mason Rice School.

Assessment

Only the exterior condition of the Jeannette West Recreation Center [the Hut] was examined. The interior was not evaluated, as it was beyond the scope of this endeavor. The building has green painted wood shingle siding and gray asphalt roof shingles. It appears to be in good condition. With wood shutters covering the windows facing Tyler Terrace and metal fabric covering windows facing Hammond Brook, the building is not welcoming and gives the impression of being in disrepair. It contains the only sanitary facilities in the playground. It has been suggested that additional sanitary facilities closer to the ballfields would be desirable.

There is also a small wood shed and a large steel storage box next to the tennis practice court, a steel storage unit between the ball fields and a large metal shed near Mason-Rice School. All appear to be in good condition except the latter which is in fair condition.

The cottage near the intersection of Pleasant Street and Tyler Terrace is no longer there. It was apparently removed with the construction of Mason Rice School.

Objectives

To prohibit the siting of additional buildings in the playground.

Recommendations

Make the Recreation Center accessible. Defer accessibility improvements to the building until appropriate improvements are made inside the Recreation Center. Continue to provide periodic maintenance to the Recreation Center. No additional buildings should be added to the playground.

Recreation Center, south side, 2005

PUBLIC SAFETY AND VANDALISM

Background

While there is no specific reference to these matters related to the playground in historic documents, in 1908 Kellaway suggested that "Police powers should extend over this area, so that law and order reign." "It will probably be necessary in future to delegate an officer in citizen's clothes to act as guardian, especially when the time for the building of the shelter arrives."

At the time the playground was being developed, juvenile delinquency and vandalism was a general concern. The International Prison Congress at its 1909 October Washington Meeting adopted the following resolution:- "It is resolved that to prevent habits of vagrancy and idleness among children in large cities, there should be vast additions to playgrounds, wholesome recreation centers, gymnasiums and athletic fields as the surest preventives of juvenile mischief and crime and as affording young people places where they may learn to bear defeat with courage and success with modesty."

Assessment

Public safety has become an increasing concern over the last 30 years. The most significant public safety issues relate to the brooks, fencing and the play structure area. The brooks have vertical walls that are only partially fenced, providing some level of protection near the play structure area. The sand surfacing at the play structure area is noncompliant in that it does not provide a sufficient level of cushioning for a fall. The steps and stepped ramp near the Recreation Center are both in poor condition and dangerous.

It has been reported that teenagers hang out in or near the basketball court at Mason-Rice School and the play structure area in the playground at night. Alcohol containers have reportedly been found in the area and bonfires have occurred in the field area. Centrally located in the playground, with a degree of concealment and good sight lines to playground entrances, it is difficult to apprehend offenders. Police are easily spotted from a distance and there are numerous alternative escape routes.

It has been suggested that operational lights in the field area are desirable to facilitate seeing vandals.

Objectives

To enhance the safety and security of park visitors.

To keep vandalism to a minimum.

Recommendations

Vegetative management along the brooks and additional lighting in the playground is recommended to improve overall visibility, increase the perception of safety, help facilitate observation by police patrol and reduce vandalism. Increased police presence and enforcement is critical to change inappropriate activities and perceptions about the park.

The play structure area is already scheduled for replacement. Other recommendations related to the brooks, fencing, steps and stepped ramp are included elsewhere.

SITE FURNISHINGS

Benches

Background

Little mention is made of benches in historic documents. The 1908 and 1911 Kellaway plans both note a seat among the Willows near the bridge northeast of the tennis courts. Photographs of the children's corner from c1909 and c1913 depict benches with backs composed of wood slats and probable iron supports. Appropriations were made for park benches throughout the park system in 1937. Park benches were repaired and painted in 1985.

Assessment

There are 5 styles of benches in the playground in the park today: 3 of wood with backs and concrete supports; 6 of wood with backs and steel supports [tennis courts]; 4 of recycled material with backs and steel supports [play structure area], 1 of wood without a back [play structure area]; and 4 of aluminum without backs [team benches]. Most are related to activities, with very few sited in passive areas. All are in good to fair condition. Benches at the tennis courts are set too low.

Bench in the Childrens Corner, c1909
[Courtesy of City of Newton Public Documents]

Trash Receptacles

Background

No historic reference to trash receptacles has been found. A 1913 photograph depicts a wood keg that might have been used as a waste receptacle.

Assessment

A number of green painted 55 gallon drums serve as trash receptacles. There is one next to Tyler Terrace at the Recreation Center, 3 in the area of the basketball court and tennis courts and 3 near the baseball and Little League fields. All are in good to fair condition. It has been reported that some believe that there are an insufficient quantity of receptacles in the playground.

Picnic Tables

Background

A plan from 1930 indicates that there were 3 tables in the park in the current play structure area. They may have been considered work tables for activities at that time.

Assessment

There are no tables in the park today.

Drinking Fountains

Background

A "bubble drinking fountain with single cup" was erected in 1908. It is likely the one shown on a 1930 plan in the current play apparatus area. In 1940 park facilities included 2 drinking fountains.

Assessment

There are two inoperable drinking fountains, one in the play structure area and one near the tennis courts. While both are constructed of precast concrete, neither has the same character as others installed in 1908. The one near the tennis courts is scheduled for replacement.

Bench near Hammond Brook, 2005

Tables at Childrens Corner, 1913
[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

Drinking fountain in Newton Highlands, 1909
[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

Signs

Background

The only historic reference to signs found was related to the controversy about signage at the Little League field in 1991.

Assessment

Today there is a very large playground identification sign at the corner of Centre Street and Tyler Terrace, a cautionary sign about brook flooding at the bridge near the tennis courts, an identification sign and Roy Miller Memorial electronic scoreboard at the Little League field and a variety of regulatory signs at entrances, on the park perimeter and inside the park. Materials and conditions vary a great deal giving a poor, unattractive and uncoordinated image. Facing Newton Centre, the sole park identification sign is partially concealed by vegetation and difficult to see from any other orientation.

Objectives

To enhance the experience of visitors through attractive and functional site amenities.

To reconfirm the historic character of Newton Centre Playground through the use of appropriate site amenities.

Identification Sign, 2005

Recommendations

Benches

Benches serve an important contemporary purpose and should continue to have a place in the playground. While the style of the existing benches relates to a period later than c1905, they should remain in place for the time being because of the expense of immediate replacement. At such time as they are beyond repair, they should be replaced with benches that are more appropriate to the era of significance. While it may be desirable to have benches that are lighter in appearance, like those in historic photographs, consideration should be given to selecting a city wide style of bench for Newton's historic parks to ease long term maintenance requirements for the city.

In general, more benches should be provided throughout the playground, particularly in relation to passive recreation areas. Where possible, benches should be placed in relation to tree plantings such that shade is provided. Ideally, benches should be placed with a hard surface beneath them to prevent the eroded appearance that lawn will give.

Proposed Bench with recycled plastic slats

Trash Receptacles

Trash receptacles should be provided to satisfy public expectations even though none have been seen in historic images of the park. Receptacles should be retained at key points that tend to generate trash like active recreation facilities. Receptacles should ideally be visually compatible with the character of other amenities in this historic open space.

Picnic Tables

Other parks in the city are more appropriate for permanent picnic facilities. Do not provide picnic tables in the playground.

Proposed Trash Receptacle

Drinking Fountains

Replace existing drinking fountains with a universally accessible model that is visually compatible with the historic character of the playground. Like the sign system, this would ideally also be appropriate for all of the historic parks in the city. The drinking fountain near the play structure area should have an associated hose bibb to facilitate cleaning the play equipment.

Signs

Consistency of signage with an overall sign program consisting of identification, regulatory, orientation and interpretive signs would benefit the park. A new system of consistent and appropriate signs is recommended to present a sense of uniformity and wholeness. This system can be viewed as an invitation into the park. Signs should be legible and visually compatible with the character of the grounds. The system should be designed to reflect the historic quality of the park. Consideration should be given to developing a system that is appropriate for all of the historic parks in the city.

Accessible Drinking Fountain

Decisions related to sign materials should be made with consideration to the overall setting. Many materials, colors and styles can be visually distracting in terms of viewing a historic property. The placement of signs inside the park should be coordinated with drive and path systems so that visitors naturally remain on path surfaces and are not attracted to walk on lawn surfaces.

Appropriate and visible identification signs are needed at entrances to the park and at specific features. Park identification signs should provide some basic information like date of establishment and historic designation, at a minimum.

Regulatory signs enumerating rules and regulations are critical to help resolve and control issues related to use, including the requirement to keep wheels on paved surfaces. Standard city speed and parking regulatory signs can be used in public ways.

Although it is important not to over sign because they become less effective and create visual clutter, directional signing is often welcome. Directional and orientation signs, including orientation maps, make visitor information easily available.

Identification Sign

Identification Sign

The placement of a supporting informational or interpretive sign system component is also recommended. Identifying and giving direction to important sites, as well as providing explanations for particular historic features would be very beneficial in assisting visitors understand the significance of this resource.

MEMORIALS

Background

There is no reference to the desire or placement of memorials in the playground.

Assessment

There are 2 memorials in the playground today. A memorial bench was erected in the play structure area in 1989 with an associated bronze plaque mounted on a small boulder. The bench is dedicated to Sarah S. B. Philipps who died in a tragic airplane bombing en route from Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988. The Roy Miller Memorial scoreboard at the Little League field was dedicated c1991. Both memorials are in good condition.

Objectives

To limit the addition of new monuments, memorials and markers except as appropriate to the overall design intent.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for the other memorials at this time. Recommendations pertaining to the issue of monuments, memorials and commemorative markers in the playground are included under Maintenance/Management.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Background

The description of the 1891 design in the Olmsted firm plan recommended treatment with "as much beauty as practicable, of a natural character". They wanted the "parts of the ground not needed for games and athletic exercises are to be treated with a view to securing as much beauty as practicable, of a natural character."

Kellaway pretty much agreed. The 1908 Kellaway plan provided more description. Overall the plan called for a vegetative buffer of trees and shrubs at the edges of the playground, vegetation separating use areas, and open views into the park from Centre and Pleasant Streets. Specific recommendations included removal of individual shrubs scattered about the walks near Centre Street for a simple lawn treatment, replacement of old and overgrown shrub beds near entrance walks with younger growth for low growing edging shrubs on the margins of the beds, removal of perennials in the center of the lawn and move them to a margin of shrubbery, the addition of a plantation of Pine and Hemlock 20 to 30' wide to screen the back yards from Centre Street, and the use of native shrubs [Privet, Viburnum, Barberry and Wild Rose] along the margins of border plantations, all for a general effect of openness and neat simplicity.

Willow near tennis courts, c1918
[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

At Pleasant Street open spaces with plantations of shrubs and scattered trees permitting views into the playground were recommended. A border plantation was recommended for the length of the field against the bank of the aqueduct, mostly Pines with a few deciduous trees [Paper White Birch] on the margin with a mix of Sumac, Viburnum, Privet, Cornus, and Common Elder for a pleasing natural effect. Yellow or purple leaved shrubs were to be avoided. To secure the future of the grove, trees were to be added.

Tree in poor condition, 2005

Because little planting had been done except at the Centre Street entrance where 3 large shrubs beds had been installed in 1898, it was recommended that planting be done as soon as possible. Shrubs were to be planted in masses and allowed to grow naturally to reduce maintenance. Isolated shrubs were to be avoided. Ornamental shrubs [Spiraea, Honeysuckle, Deutzia, Forsythia] could be used near entrances.

The 1908 survey of the park indicated that it contained 33 Maple, 22 Elm, 9 Willow [some of which were clumps], 4 Buttonwood, 4 Apple, 3 Horsechestnut, 2 Oak and 1 Catalpa. In 1912 beds were laid out and shrubs planted at the Homer Street entrance. The Bowen Street entrance was also raised, graded and planted with shrubs. A 1930 survey of the central portion of the park indicated that it contained a Pear orchard, Pinery, 17 Maple, 9 Birch, 7 Elm, 6 Willow, 2 Wild Cherry and 1 Oak.

Assessment

While general recommendations were made by Kellaway, there is little record of specific plantings that were installed. The oldest and largest trees, mostly Oaks and Maples that existed in 1908, are in poor condition having received little maintenance over the years. Shade trees historically seen in the childrens corner have also diminished in quantity. Overgrown shrubs near the Centre Street entrances may be remnants of original plantings. Willows along the brooks have disappeared and have largely been replaced with several large groves of evergreen trees, changing the character of the playground.

View into playground from Tyler Terrace/Centre Street entrance, 2005

The initial design intent of the Olmsted firm was to relocate the brooks, provide waterside planting adjacent to them and use vegetation elsewhere to provide a perimeter buffer and separate various use areas. The brooks were not moved, leaving them to bisect the playground. Vegetation, volunteer and purposeful, lines the brooks creating overgrown edges and accentuating a division of the park. A good deal of this volunteer growth was removed by the City during the winter of 2005-2006. The perimeter buffer is mostly gone and the various use areas are not separated. Few street trees exist, likely due to conflicts with overhead wires.

Existing deciduous tree species include Ash, White Birch, Boxelder, Catalpa, Ginkgo, Linden, Norway Maple, Red Maple, Silver Maple, Sugar Maple, Red Oak, White Oak and other species. Evergreen trees include Red Pine, White Pine, Colorado Blue Spruce, Norway Spruce, White Spruce and Thuya. Shrubs include Forsythia, Privet, Spirea and Sumac. Invasives include Bittersweet. The City arborist has provided an evaluation of 78 trees in the playground and that inspection report is included in the appendix. While most of the trees are in good condition, 33% have structural deficiencies, mostly Maples.

The playground does not contain habitats of rare species, wildlife or vernal pools.

Several areas appear unused or undeveloped like the north side of Hammond Brook along Centre Street and the Homer Street entrance. Views of backyards from Centre Street are still evident.

Objectives

To use vegetation to restore the scenery and historic style intended for the park.

To enhance scenic opportunities in the park as seen from adjacent streets.

To use vegetation as a buffer, border or screen between conflicting uses and as a separation of major use areas.

To create healthy, long lived plant communities within the park.

To develop an ongoing vegetation management program.

Recommendations

The landscape character that was envisioned by the Olmsted firm and others should be developed as much as possible with the addition of "natural beauty". Permanent plantings consisting primarily of shade trees should be interspersed in appropriate locations along pathways for shade. Provide additional vegetation throughout for shade, particularly in relation to the play structure area.

Provide street trees along perimeter streets, setting them on the playground side of the sidewalks to reduce interference with overhead wires in the right of way. Provide evergreen screening at neighboring back yards as suggested in the Kellaway plans.

Views and vistas should be restored wherever possible to maintain the sense of expanse and distance. Reduce the density of vegetation along the brooks, particularly Hammond Brook, to increase visual access to the brooks and the playground in general. Volunteer and invasive growth should be removed throughout the playground.

Shrubs and Horticultural Displays: A desire for more color and variety should be accomplished primarily with large and small trees. The use of shrubs and flowers should be limited to the capacity of the city to maintain them. Large perennial and flower beds are very labor intensive. Areas for the display of flowers should be limited to pedestrian entrances.

This overall plan, particularly in regard to vegetation, should be viewed as a long term goal for revegetation. After the removal of hazardous trees and pruning of trees to remain, trees should be replaced in general conformance with this overall plan which takes into account the intent of the Olmsted firm plan. Detailed planting plans should be developed for review and approval by the Department of Parks and Recreation prior to implementing the recommendations of this plan.

WALLS AND FENCES

Walls

Background

Other than reference to walls related to the brooks, the only other mention found was a recommendation to remove a stone retaining wall at the Homer Street entrance by Kellaway in 1908.

Assessment

There are few walls in the playground today other than the stone walls associated with the brooks. The others that exist are concrete retaining walls. One retains the sidewalk and supports a chain link fence along Tyler Terrace and another retains earth at the southeast corner of the tennis courts. The former is beginning to spall. The latter is in good condition. Stone walls associated with the brooks are discussed under storm water management.

Fences and Gates

Background

Other than fencing related to athletic facilities, the only other reference includes a low fence that had been built to protect the path at the southwest entrance of the park on Centre Street in 1898. Although the 1891 Olmsted firm plan included gate posts at each pedestrian entrance, there is no evidence that they were ever built. The Kellaway plans did not include them. Five years after the 1925 inaugural address Mayor Edwin O. Childs, when he stated "some fencing is needed at Newton Centre Playground", an appropriation was made for a boundary fence.

Assessment

There are numerous fences in and adjacent to the playground. Without a property line survey, it is difficult to ascertain the ownership of fences along bordering back yards which tend to be either wood or chain link. While these fences were not evaluated, many had gates providing access into the playground.

A chain link fence with galvanized fabric and painted posts lines the steep bank at the edge of Tyler Terrace from the steps adjacent to the tennis courts to the Recreation Center. A 40' long section has been damaged where many of the posts are no longer attached to the foundation below.

The chain link fences associated with the baseball and Little League fields are in good condition. The perimeter chain link fence at the tennis courts is rusted on 3 sides of the courts. The fence along the south side is in better condition.

The chain link fences associated with the brook relates to the play structure area, basketball court and play structure area of Mason-Rice School. It is incomplete and with a height of 36" does not comply with current safety standards. However, much of the brooks have less than a 30" depth and thus does not mandate the provision of protective fencing. These fences are primarily composed of vinyl fabric and galvanized posts. Bridges over the brooks and headwalls also have chain link fencing. All of this fencing is in fair to good condition.

There are two vehicular gates in the playground, tubular galvanized steel gates at Homer Street and Tyler Terrace. Both are in fair condition. The former appears to be always closed and vehicles drive around it. The latter appears to be always open. There is no gate control at the Centre Street entrance.

Objectives

To enhance the experience of visitors through attractive and functional walls and fences.

To reconfirm the historic character of Newton Centre Playground through the use of appropriate walls and fences.

To meet current public safety standards while restoring historic character.

Recommendations

Walls

Eliminate the stone walls along one or both edges of Hammond Brook and the south end of the brook from Homer Street in conjunction with naturalizing the brooks as discussed under Storm Water Management. Repair and repoint the remaining stone walls and headwalls.

Fences and Gates

Provide 42″ high vinyl coated chain link fences along Hammond Brook where walls are to remain.

Provide a barrier rail along all public way frontage to restrict vehicular access and provide an appropriate public image for the playground. The rail should be of such a design that it does not collect trash. Remove the gates at Homer Street and Tyler Terrace when the barrier rail is installed. Provide gate posts at pedestrian entrances as suggested in the Olmsted firm plan as well as at the Tyler Terrace drive entrance. Where necessary, provide bollards at pedestrian entrances and bridges for pedestrian use to prevent vehicular access.

Fences for active recreation facilities should be as low as practical [4′ maximum height preferred], vinyl coated and uniform in color, preferably black. Fences should be eliminated if possible. Fences that serve no practical purpose should be removed.

Determine ownership of the perimeter fences bordering back yards and take appropriate action if they are city owned fences.

Proposed Barrier Rail

STORM WATER MANAGEMENT

Background

Prior to the development of an overall plan for the playground, tile drains were laid in one section of the site [in the area of the ballfield] at an average depth of 3'-9" about 24' apart discharging through a connecting pipe into the brook in 1889. Some tile drains already existed in the area in 1869. City Engineer Albert F. Noyes recommended having another section completed west of the area just finished. The brook from Homer Street to Hammond Brook was relocated from the center of the property to the east edge sometime between 1869 and 1890.

The 1891 Olmsted firm preliminary plan for the playground recommended relocating the brooks to the edges of the property "to leave a large area of unbroken turf for ball games". In addition, the channels or walled ditches were to be changed such that they had the "character of natural brooks". In work a year earlier at the Centre Street end, they proposed filling the site, softening the brook section and providing a rustic bridge as an entrance portal to the playground.

In December of 1892 a plan was prepared showing areas requiring drainage in the City as a response to Order no. 11680 of 24 June 1889. Newton Centre Playground was included in that plan. A plan for the surface drainage of the City was prepared at the same time as well as a plan showing the proposed location of park areas, drainage and aqueducts. In a report of City Engineer Albert F. Noyes and Edward A. Buss, CC, an open channel treatment of construction was recommended through parkways or reservations except through high priced localities or under special circumstances where the treatment was to be ornamental rather than a detriment to surrounding properties. A chain of parkways between villages was seen as an economical location for drains and sewage.

In December of 1897 another plan was prepared showing areas requiring drainage. This plan also included the area of Newton Centre Playground. A culvert was built over the brook at Centre Street in 1898. A plan of the existing conditions of the playground in 1908 indicates that Hammond Brook was walled with a bridge near the tennis courts. The reinforced concrete bridge had been built that year. The brook from Homer Street had steep banks. Neither brook had been relocated as previously recommended in the Olmsted firm plans.

Hammond Brook, view south toward Centre Street, undated, [Courtesy of Newton Free Library]

The 1908 Kellaway plan only recommended relocating the western end of Hammond Brook. It was noted that a deeper channel had been constructed for quite a portion of the way with concrete sides and a stone bed and that the last section of the brook would need to be widened and deepened in the future to take care of increasing development around Chestnut Hill. The plan recommended 5 rustic stone bridges built of permanent character with long wing walls and graceful lines. Vines and shrubs were to be provided to soften the stone work.

The 1911 Kellaway plan proposed covering the brooks to maximize available space for playfields. This proposal was executed in part in 1938 when the brook along the north side of the tennis courts was covered. At the same time the brooks were deepened and lined with stone, and the junction of the 2 brooks was realigned.

Assessment

The playground is in a valley, draining into the drainage channels of Hammond Brook and others. The high point of the playground on the south side is on the Tyler Terrace sidewalk near the Recreation Center at about elevation 151. On the north side the high point is on the Homer Street sidewalk at about elevation 142. Most of the recreation facilities are at elevation 129 to 130. The Little league field is slightly higher at about elevation 132. The outlet of Hammond Brook is about elevation 124.

Hammond Brook and another brook from Homer Street flow through the park. They join and flow toward Pleasant Street where water from the waste weir of the Sudbury Aqueduct enters the brook, and the combined brook passes under the Cochituate Aqueduct. Storm water from adjacent streets, parking areas and residences also enters the brook at various points. A portion of Hammond Brook, between the tennis and basketball courts, is covered.

Hammond Brook below Recreation Center, 2005

Hammond Brook below Mason-Rice School, 2006

The brooks are contained within stone masonry walls with a stone drainageway base that has stones set in cement. Walls at the brook from Homer Street are 2′ high while those along Hammond Brook are 3′ high with 1.5 to 1 adjacent side slopes. Most of the walls have a cement parge coat cap and some have parging on the vertical face of the wall. A portion of the wall is collapsing between the play structure area and basketball court. The drainageway floor has collapsed above the bridge. Another portion of the wall is collapsing near the bridge next to the Mason-Rice school play structure area. Numerous volunteer trees are growing out of the walls. They have and will continue to contribute to failure of the walls.

Five bridges were built as suggested in the 1908 Kellaway plan, one prior to the plan and 3 in locations close to those recommended. Each has concrete spanning the brook. One has been built up with an asphalt path over it and another has a turf cover over the concrete. Most have pedestrian widths of 6 to 8′. The turf covered bridge is about 10′ wide. The bridge at the end of the drive from Tyler Terrace is about 18′ wide for vehicular use.

While the structural condition of the bridges was not assessed, water was observed flowing out of the masonry joints in two of the walls during a rainstorm in May 2006.

Portions of the park are subject to flooding. It has been reported that during heavy rain events the ball fields flood to the base of the Cochituate aqueduct, approximate elevation 129. While this is said to occur on almost an annual basis, the duration of flooding is reported to be relatively short. During a rainy period in May 2006 the brook from Homer Street was observed to be over half full while water flowing in the east and west ends of Hammond Brook had topped the masonry wall channels. Earlier in the year the brook for Homer Street was observed dry while there was some flow in Hammond Brook.

Sign at Hammond Brook, 2005

Volunteer trees growing in Hammond Brook channel walls, 2006

Bridge over Hammond Brook, 2005

Hammond Brook during a rain event, 2006

Many areas below elevation 129 have very shallow slopes, ranging from 0.5% to 1.5% which is generally insufficient for positive drainage in lawn areas. An extensive area of standing water does occur in and west of play structure area and east of the Mason-Rice play structure area, and there is a wet area southwest of basketball court because of shallow slopes. Standing water also occurs north of the Little League field and southeast of the basketball court in an isolated depression where a clump of Willows once stood. A tile underdrainage system, north of Hammond Brook is assumed to still be intact although it is not known if it still functions.

There are a number of erosion conditions in the playground. The most apparent is on the sledding hill west of the Recreation Center which has a slope of about 3.5 to 1. It has also been reported that there is significant amount of overland flow and erosion related to the maintenance drive at Tyler Terrace. There are also smaller areas adjacent to the brook and some related to the basketball court.

Objectives

To eliminate standing water by providing positive drainage.

To eliminate erosion and sedimentation conditions.

Standing water in play structure area and soccer field beyond, 2006

Erosion near Recreation Center, 2005

Recommendations

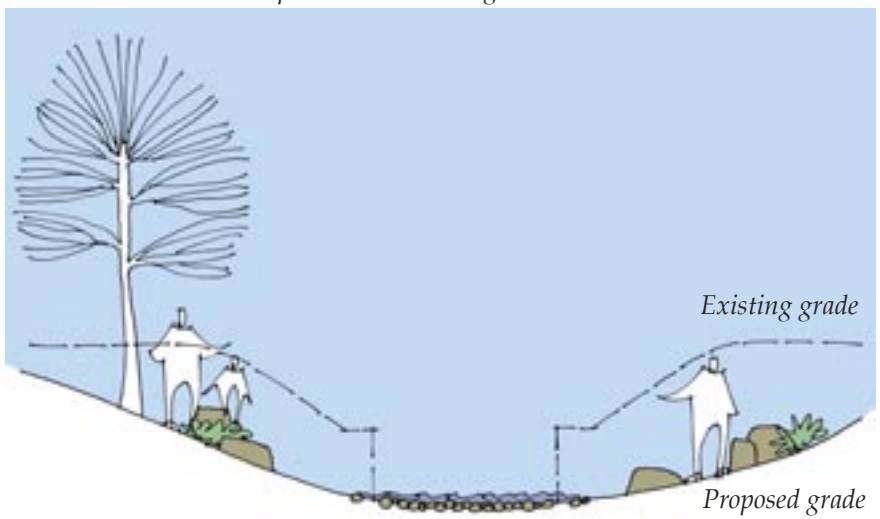
The flooding issue should be resolved downstream of the site to reduce the impact of providing flood storage capacity inside the playground.

Naturalize the brooks in accordance with the intent of the Olmsted firm plan. This will require expansion of the stream area since it is currently within a man made channel and there are steep side slopes on both sides of Hammond Brook. While there is limited opportunity to change the alignment of the stream and reduce its linearity because of adjacent sanitary sewer and property lines, the new channel should be designed to create natural stream features and sequences with riffles, runs, pools and glides. Stones and boulders should be used to help create these features.

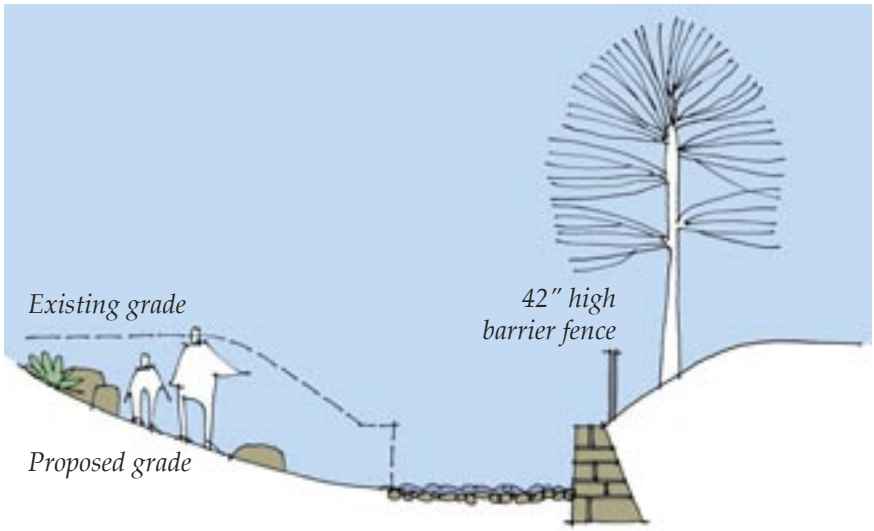
The brook from Homer Street presents an opportunity to create riffles or step pools because of the change in elevation along its course as it approaches Hammond Brook. A pool could be created at the intersection of the brooks as well as at other pipe inlets to dissipate energy within the stream and reduce erosion. The channel within the stream bed should be sized to accommodate full flows without eroding. The areas along the sides the brooks can then be designed so that they will flood without eroding in larger storm events.

The material at the bottom of the channel should be selected so that it will not erode in a bank full condition. The channel bottom currently consists of eight inches of "grouted stone pavement." This material should be replaced with cobbles and stone, that are sized to withstand the same erosive forces as the existing pavement. Reconstruction of the bottom of the channel will reduce the velocity in the brooks because it will create a more irregular surface. The reduction in the velocity will likely require that the width of the stream be increased. Removal of the existing bottom will also encourage infiltration along the length of the brooks. Further testing should be done to assess groundwater table and the impact of removing the channel bottom on the depth of flow in the stream.

Proposed section through brook



Proposed section through Hammond Brook where one wall is to be retained [adjacent to Mason-Rice School and behind the homes near Willow Terrace]



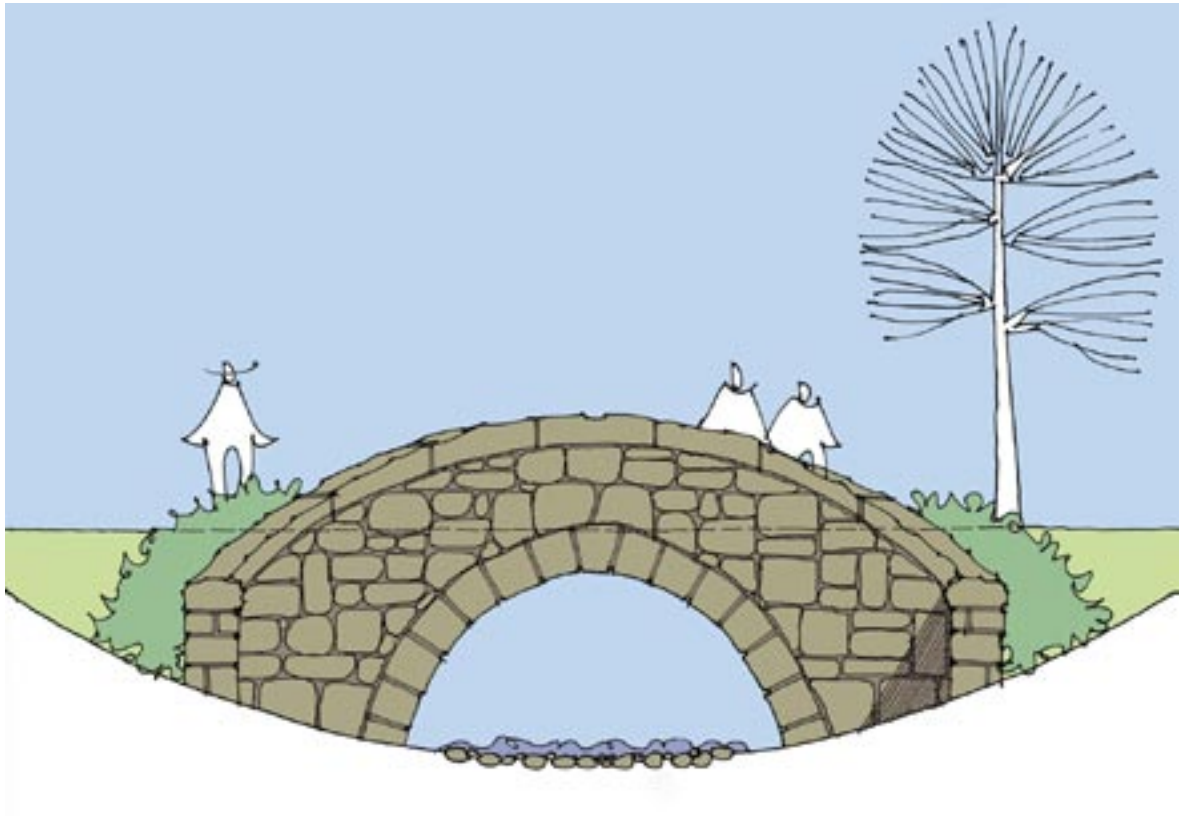
Provide new bridges over Hammond Brook near the Centre Street entrance and the Mason-Rice School parking area as well as near the new play structure area over the brook from Homer Street to improve accessibility to the playground. The first two should have a sufficient width for pedestrian use while the latter should be wide enough for vehicular access. The latter should also replace the existing adjacent bridge. All other bridges should remain in place.

The new vehicular bridge should have a 12′ clear width and be designed for H-20 loading to support emergency vehicles. The other bridges should be designed for pedestrian use, preventing vehicular traffic with a reduced width and/or with the use of bollards.

The style of the new bridges should be consistent with the intent of the Olmsted firm plan. That is they should have a style that is compatible with natural scenery, made of rustic stone masonry with curving walls. In the event that the cost of stone exceeds budget limitations at the time of construction, rustic wood bridges would be an acceptable alternative.

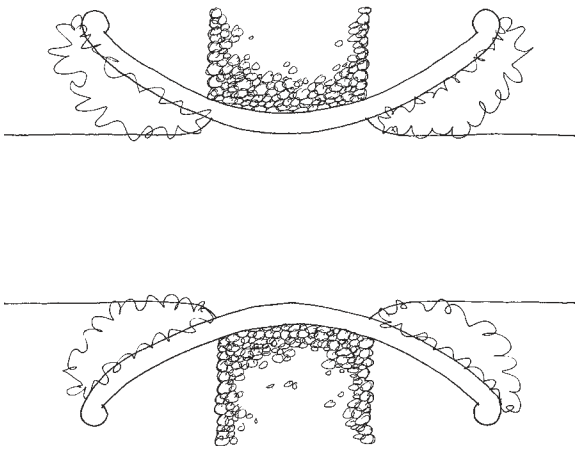
The 4 bridges to remain over Hammond Brook should be reconstructed in a similar style as such time as they need structural repairs. Existing deteriorated sections of the remaining channels should be repaired as soon as possible.

Conceptual elevation of new stone bridge



Olmsted firm stone bridge, c1892
Ellicott Arch, Franklin Park, Boston

Conceptual plan of new stone bridge



Utilize excess excavated material, including topsoil, from the various implementation projects to fill in depressions and erosion areas. Provide proper and ongoing maintenance to eliminate concentrated overland flows.

Alternative bridge

INFRASTRUCTURE

Electric

Background

There is little reference to lighting in the park until the 1966 annual report when it was noted that the toboggan chute had night lights. Lights were added in 1971 for Pop Warner football and in 1994 at the basketball court.

Assessment

The 4 fixtures at the basketball court have not been used in a number of years. It is not known if the fixtures on wood utility poles in the area of the baseball and soccer fields are functional although it has been reported that the one near the field is not operating. Placement appears random and many of the utility poles are leaning and in poor condition. There is some security lighting related to the Recreation Center. Overhead wires provide electrical service.

Former light at bridge near tennis courts, 2005

Water supply

Background

Water was brought into the park for the drinking fountain installed in 1908. A second drinking fountain was installed in 1940 adjacent to the tennis courts. New water lines were installed at the Little League field in 1964 for irrigation.

Assessment

The drinking fountains are no longer functional. Water supply has also been provided to the tennis courts to help maintain them and to the Little League field for irrigation.

Light along path to ball fields, 2005

Sanitary Sewer

Background

In 1892 a chain of parkways between villages was seen as an economical location for drains and sewage. A sanitary sewer was installed adjacent to Hammond Brook prior to 1930.

Proposed Light

Assessment

A 20" sanitary sewer runs parallel to Hammond Brook. Water was observed flowing out of a manhole cover near the intersection of Hammond Brook and the brook from Homer Street during a rain event in May 2006.

Objectives

To provide utility services that would benefit enjoyment and maintenance of the park.

To provide remedial measures for utility services that are detrimental to the site.

To accommodate utility services in a manner that is compatible with the historic image of the site.

To provide lighting for the safety and security of park users.

Recommendations

Electric

Provide a limited amount of general illumination inside the playground to increase the sense of safety and to reduce vandalism and discourage other night time activities in the park. Given that the playground officially closes at dusk and is in a residential neighborhood, sports fields and courts should not be illuminated for night use.

Develop and follow a strategy to make lighting inside the playground more uniform and consistent in terms of poles and fixtures. Select a pole and fixture appropriate for use throughout Newton's historic parks. Light sources should be energy efficient, like color corrected mercury vapor, and they should be shielded so as not to impact abutters and reduce light pollution of the night sky. Replace all nonconforming fixtures.

Remove overhead wires and unnecessary utility poles in the park. Place required electric service underground.

Water Supply

In addition to upgrading drinking fountains, maintain water supply for lawn restoration, plant establishment and cleaning.

Sanitary Sewer

No changes recommended.

Baseball field, 2005

Implementation

PRIORITIES AND PHASING
Priorities were established in public meetings with the Newton Parks and Recreation Department. Emphasis was placed on making the playground accessible, resolving public safety issues, and general landscape improvements

Proposed work is divided into three phases to facilitate implementation of the improvements. While the phases have been listed in a prioritized sequence, it is understood that there are competing interests and limited funds and that the actual order of events will depend completely upon sources and availability of funds and the needs and desires of the City. Phases can also be combined or further subdivided as funding requires.

The proposed phasing assumes a long term commitment with a prioritized systems approach, as opposed to an area by area approach. The former tends to be more economical in terms of public bidding. The latter could be more appealing in that completion of an area could provide the impetus to finish other areas. It will also however create an unfinished look to untouched areas of the park until they are all complete.

Each phase includes safety pruning and other arborist work for large trees to remain along with hazardous tree removals within the general area of work. Each phase also includes utilizing excess excavated topsoil to fill in depressions.

Phase One
The focus of this phase initiates and improves accessibility to and within the playground. Proposed work includes an early action component to provide universal access to a new play structure area funded by private sources. It also includes utilizing the Mason-Rice School parking area and providing a paved pedestrian route from the parking area to the new play structure area in the playground.

With elimination of vehicular access to the playground from Tyler Terrace in the early action component, the remaining work of this phase includes providing a 12' wide paved route for emergency/service vehicles from Centre Street to all of the major recreation areas inside the playground via a new bridge over the brook from Homer Street.

The rest of this phase also includes a new 6' wide accessible pedestrian route into the playground from Homer Street, designation of on street handicap parking on Homer and Bowen Streets, a new bridge over Hammond Brook from the Mason-Rice School parking area providing improved access to the ball fields, providing protective fencing along both edges of the brooks where deemed necessary and resolving flooding issues in the playground downstream of the site.

Phase Two
This phase continues accessibility improvements as well as providing general improvements to recreation facilities and the perimeter image of the playground.

It includes 6' wide paved pedestrian routes from Bowen Street into the playground and to the play structure area and basketball court, a path from the new bridge over Hammond Brook from the Mason-Rice School parking area to the ball fields and play structure area, and replacement of the path from the Centre Street/Tyler Terrace intersection into the playground.

Recreation facility improvements include replacement of the tennis practice court as well as the backboard, replacement of fencing around the tennis courts, and repair of the basketball court surface. Improvements to site furnishings are also included with new and additional benches, particularly related to passive recreation areas, replacement of drinking fountains and trash receptacles, and a new integrated sign system with identification signs at each pedestrian entrance and uniform regulatory signs.

Perimeter image improvements include providing a barrier rail and street trees along all public ways and vegetative screening at neighboring back yards.

Phase Three
Completion of accessibility improvements as well as general improvements to the brooks, upgrading of lighting and providing supplemental interior planting are the primary focus of this phase of work.

Accessibility improvements include a new paved pedestrian route and a new bridge over Hammond Brook into the playground from the Centre/Bowen Street intersection, a new path from the steps near the tennis courts into the park, repair of those steps, and new steps connecting the Cochituate Aqueduct trail to the park.

This phase also includes naturalizing Hammond Brook as envisioned in the Olmsted firm plans by removing walls along one or both sides of Hammond Brook and the south end of the brook from Homer Street. Deteriorated areas of the remaining channels and walls will be repaired. Lighting inside the playground will be upgraded and additional vegetation will be provided throughout the playground for shade while dense vegetation along the brooks will be reduced to open up visual access to the playground and brooks.

Future Considerations
Accessibility improvements within and to the Recreation Center as well as designation of on street handicap parking on Tyler Terrace should be a high priority, but are beyond the scope of this endeavor.

MASTER PLAN COST ESTIMATE
This estimate is presented in the phases described herein. It should be considered preliminary in nature and used for discussion purposes only. Many items should be considered flexible because of the scale and level of detail development of this plan. It should be noted that these estimated costs are for budgeting purposes only. These estimates are in year 2006 dollars and are subject to change. Although construction costs were very stable between 1990 and 1995, some have increased substantially in recent years, particularly related to oil, cement, steel, iron and copper. Estimates reflect a public bid process. Some of these costs could be reduced with selected services provided by City forces.

For the purposes of this estimate, it has been assumed that work will be completed in four consecutive years with work commencing in 2006. An assumed factor of 5% inflation per year has been included. Delays in proceeding with this work could cause inflation to easily double this estimate in a very short period. Other project costs like fees for design and permitting, reproduction of construction documents and materials testing during construction have also been included.

SUMMARY ESTIMATE

Phase One - Early Action*	106,000
Phase One - Completion	616,000
Phase Two	775,000
Phase Three	1,058,000
Grand Total	$2,550,000

*Note: These costs do not include $360,000 contributed by private donors for the new play area.

NEWTON
Parks & Recreation

Accessibility and Rehabilitation Phasing Plan
NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND
City of Newton Parks and Recreation Department
Newton, Massachusetts

Walker-Kluesing Design Group
Bellalta 3 Design
Judith Nitsch Engineering, Inc.
May 2006
Scale: 1" = 60'

DETAILED COST ESTIMATES

PHASE ONE - Early Action

Item	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal	Total
Site Preparation					
Site clearing & preparation	12,450	sf	$0.35	$4,358	
Erosion control	800	lf	3	2,400	
Tree pruning and removals	3	ea	500	1,500	
Tree protection	200	lf	18	3,600	
Remove bit. paving @ Mason-Rice	5,100	sf	2.50	12,750	
					$24,608
Earthwork					
Strip and stockpile topsoil	16,400	sf	0.25	4,100	
Fill at Mason-Rice drive	100	cy	15	1,500	
					5,600
Paving					
Bituminous walks	6,200	sf	3	18,600	
Handicap marking @ Mason-Rice		ls		1,500	
Repair stepped ramp @ Recreation Center		ls		5,000	
					25,100
Site Improvements					
Metal bollards	4	ea	1,500	6,000	
					6,000
Lawns and Planting					
Spread topsoil	300	cy	10	3,000	
Fine grade, hydroseed	16,300	sf	0.35	5,705	
					8,705
					70,013
General Conditions					10,502
Contingency					8,085
Other Project Costs					17,400
Total					$106,000

PHASE ONE - Completion

Item	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal	Total
Site Preparation					
Site clearing & preparation	26,200	sf	0.35	9,170	
Erosion control	1,000	lf	3	3,000	
Tree pruning and removals	14	ea	500	7,000	
Tree protection	120	lf	18	2,160	
Remove existing fence @ brook	480	lf	4	1,920	
Remove bridge	20	lf	25	500	
Remove bituminous walk @ Homer St.	920	sf	2.50	2,300	
Remove stonedust walk @ Homer St.	2,075	sf	1.50	3,112	
					29,162
Earthwork					
Strip and stockpile topsoil	42,000	sf	0.25	10,500	
Fill at Homer Street	775	cy	15	11,625	
					22,125
Paving					
Bituminous drive w/chip seal	23,150	sf	3.75	86,872	
Bituminous walk w/chip seal	2,000	sf	4	8,000	
Chip seal early action paving	9,800	sf	0.50	4,900	
Handicap parking signs Bowen & Homer		ls		2,000	
					101,772
Fences and Gates					
Fence @ Hammond Brook edge	410	lf	20	8,200	
					8,200
Site Improvements					
Metal bollards	2	ea	1,500	3,000	
					3,000
Lawns and Planting					
Spread topsoil	780	cy	10	7,800	
Fine grade, hydroseed	42,250	sf	0.35	14,788	
Mulch, 3" depth	10	cy	60	600	
Evergreen trees	4	ea	600	2,400	
Deciduous trees	56	ea	750	42,000	
Evergreen and deciduous shrubs	40	ea	75	3,000	
					70,588
Concrete					
Bridge floor, vehicular	240	sf	25	6,000	
Bridge floor, pedestrian	160	sf	15	2,400	
					8,400

Masonry					
Stone walls @ vehicular bridge	64	lf	1,000	64,000	
Stone walls @ pedestrian bridge	58	lf	1,000	58,000	
Stone wall @ Homer St. entry path	60	lf	350	21,000	
					143,000
					386,247
General Conditions					57,953
Contingency					44,400
Inflation, 1 year @ 5%					24,400
Other Project Costs					103,000
Total					$616,000

PHASE TWO

Item & Description	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal	Total
Site Preparation					
Site clearing & preparation	12,500	sf	0.35	4,375	
Erosion control	600	lf	3	1,800	
Tree removal and pruning	40	ea	500	20,000	
Tree protection	250	lf	18	4,500	
Remove practice court	2,140	sf	2.50	5,350	
Remove tennis court backboard		ls		2,000	
Remove CLF @ tennis courts	720	lf	5	3,600	
Remove gates @ tennis courts	3	ea	100	300	
Remove CLF along Tyler Terrace	723	lf	4	2,892	
Remove benches @ tennis courts	6	ea	200	1,200	
Remove drinking fountains	2	ea	500	1,000	
Remove basketball paving	840	sf	2.50	2,100	
Remove basketball lighting	4	ea	600	2,400	
					51,517
Earthwork					
Strip and stockpile topsoil	28,700	sf	0.25	7,175	
Fill @ Bowen Street	1,200	cy	15	18,000	
					25,175
Paving					
Bituminous concrete walks w/chip seal	8,100	sf	4	32,400	
Tennis practice court paving/color coat	2,140	sf	6	12,840	
Basketball court paving repairs	840	sf	6	5,040	
					50,280
Site Improvements					
Identification signs	6	ea	2,000	12,000	
Regulatory signs		ls		8,000	
Benches	14	ea	2,500	35,000	
Trash receptacles	7	ea	2,000	14,000	
Drinking fountains	2	ea	8,000	16,000	
					85,000
Fences and Gates					
Wood barrier rail	2,000	lf	45	90,000	
Tennis court fencing	710	lf	35	24,850	
Tennis court pedestrian gate	1	ea	800	800	
Tennis court vehicular gate	1	ea	3,250	3,250	
					118,900

Lawns and Planting					
Spread topsoil	530	cy	10	5,300	
Fine grade, hydroseed	28,700	sf	0.35	10,045	
Mulch, 3" depth	20	cy	60	1,200	
Evergreen and deciduous shrubs	75	ea	75	5,625	
Evergreen trees	26	ea	600	15,600	
Deciduous trees	34	ea	750	25,500	
					63,270
Masonry					
Stone gate posts	16	ea	3,500	56,000	
Tennis backboard, reinforced CMU	620	sf	20	12,400	
					68,400
					462,542
General Conditions					69,358
Contingency					53,200
Inflation, 2 years @ 5%					59,900
Other Project Costs					130,000
Total					$775,000

PHASE THREE

Item	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Subtotal	Total
Site Preparation					
Site clearing & preparation	15,000	sf	0.35	5,250	
Erosion control	2,400	lf	3	7,200	
Tree removal and pruning	40	ea	500	20,000	
Tree protection	430	lf	18	7,740	
Remove brook walls	1,250	lf	20	25,000	
Remove brook floor	10,625	sf	3.50	37,188	
Remove utility poles and lights	by others				
					102,378
Earthwork					
Strip and stockpile topsoil	41,000	sf	0.25	10,250	
Excavation for brook naturalization	4,500	cy	18	81,000	
Spread excavated material	4,500	cy	10	45,000	
					136,250
Paving					
Bituminous paths w/chip seal	3,270	sf	4	13,080	
					13,080
Site Improvements					
Metal bollards	2	ea	1,500	3,000	
					3,000
Lawns and Planting					
Spread topsoil	760	cy	10	7,600	
Fine grade, hydroseed	41,120	sf	0.35	14,392	
Restoration of disturbed areas		ls		20,000	
Mulch, 3" depth	25	cy	60	1,500	
Evergreen and deciduous shrubs	600	ea	75	45,000	
Evergreen Trees	17	ea	600	10,200	
Deciduous Trees	50	ea	750	37,500	
					136,192
Concrete					
Walk near Mason-Rice School	1,200	sf	5	6,000	
Bridge floor, pedestrian	160	sf	15	2,400	
Repair concrete steps @ tennis courts	26	ea	100	2,600	
					11,000

Masonry					
Cobblestones @ brook	400	cy	28	11,200	
Boulders along brook	100	lf	100	10,000	
Stone walls @ pedestrian bridge	58	lf	1,000	58,000	
Repair brook walls, 2'-0" ht.	300	lf	80	24,000	
Repair brook walls, 3'-0" ht.	150	lf	120	18,000	
Repair stone brook floor	250	sf	15	3,750	
					124,950
Electrical					
Upgrade existing lighting	6	ea	12,500	75,000	
					75,000
					601,850
General Conditions					90,250
Contingency					69,250
Inflation, 3 years @ 5%					120,650
Other Project Costs					176,000
Total					$1,058,000

Tennis court maintenance, undated
[courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

Maintenance/management

MAINTENANCE

The overall goal of this plan is to enhance the appearance of Newton Centre Playground wherever possible and to preserve and stabilize various components. The importance of this site to the community is emphasized by well kept lawns, other components kept in a good state of repair and an inviting informative sign system. A well maintained site tends to discourage vandalism and promotes community support. All outdoor elements require regular maintenance regardless of age or condition.

The following contains a summary of general guidelines for protection, stabilization, preservation, restoration and/or maintenance. Because of the rapid advances in knowledge and techniques today, this should serve only as a general guide. Specific changes in these recommendations, particularly in regard to materials and methods, are expected over time.

These guidelines are provided for general information and are presented on a variety of levels. Most of these techniques and materials should not be used without appropriate training, and in most cases a professional should be consulted before attempting anything. Inappropriate use of these techniques and/or materials can cause irreparable damage.

MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES

The following is a summary of general guidelines for the maintenance of the various landscape components that make up Newton Centre Playground.

General Cleanup

Issues

Newton Centre Playground is currently maintained by Newton Parks and Recreation Department staff. The maintained area of the site is kept reasonably free of trash and leaves, and the grass is mown regularly. Leaves, fallen limbs and debris are removed in the spring.

Recommendations

Litter is a major problem in any public open space and one that must be controlled to create pride in a historic property. A neglected appearance seems to encourage vandalism or additional trash dumping. In this regard it is important to provide a moderate to high maintenance and management approach.

The site should receive complete attention in regard to cleanup at least every 4 weeks during the summer. Paper, trash or debris should be removed and trash receptacles emptied on a daily basis [at least 5 days a week] during the active season [approximately 30 weeks] and early in the day, preferably before 10 AM. During the less utilized season litter removal should occur at least once per week. Provide a general litter removal at least once a year in the spring. Additional maintenance should be provided immediately following holidays, weekends and periods of concentrated use. Provide a special crew for clean up after special events. Leaves should be removed during the fall and the grounds cleared of fallen branches.

Landscape Character and Vegetation Management

Issues

Vegetation Management

The primary goal of tree maintenance is to maintain healthy trees free of dead wood that could fall on people or park elements. The reasons for pruning trees may include reducing hazards, maintaining or improving tree health and structure, improving aesthetics, or satisfying specifics like: removing disease; removing dead, dying, interfering or obstructing branches; training young trees; eliminating screened areas to discourage loitering; and providing clearances for utility lines. The uncontrolled growth of trees and weeds hides vandals and can become a hazard to public safety.

Trees require pruning on a regular basis to protect the public from damage by falling limbs. Too many trees or trees of the wrong type can create shade that is too dense to support and maintain a stabilizing ground cover, making the surface subject to erosion. Too much shade can also be detrimental to some elements in that moisture could be retained for long durations, increasing the probability of biological growth on important park components.

Volunteer Growth

It is essential to maintain a landscape with an appropriate historic character. The character of a landscape is dynamic compared to the relative stasis of other historic structural components. Natural forces like landscape succession will change an unmaintained lawn into a forest in a relatively short period of time. The undeniable results of these forces are evident along brook and park edges.

Lawns

The primary ground cover in maintained areas is grass. It is generally in fair condition with areas of herbaceous weeds. Most lawn areas need renovation, including proper pH level and fertilization. Maintaining a healthy lawn cover with adequate light, moisture and nutrients and good maintenance procedures would reduce bare spots, weeds, moss and erosion.

Soils

Soil analysis and testing helps determine the proper quantity and ratio of nutrients and other additives to improve a soil. Tests for pH and fertility levels should be made every 3 to 5 years to determine fertility changes made with basic treatments and to give a bench mark for further soil improvements. It typically also takes 3 to 5 years for the soil and the basic treatments to reach an equilibrium.

Recommendations

Vegetation Management

New plantings and pruning or removal of trees should be done with care. Choices must be made in terms of tree thinning and selective replanting in order to maintain growing conditions for all of the site's vegetation while maintaining a collection of trees which gives character to the site's landscape. Water newly planted trees for the first 3 to 5 years, or until an irrigation system is in place. Remove guy wires, stakes and other support devices from newly planted trees after the first year.

Inspect trees to safeguard against threats to elements from root systems and falling or scraping branches. Inspections should be made on a yearly basis and after each storm where winds exceed 55 mph. Ideally, trees should be pruned to remove potentially hazardous dead wood on a yearly basis, but safety pruning every 5 years by certified arborists is acceptable. A 5 year cycle of pruning will help maintain and preserve large old trees.

Trees should be pruned in such a manner as to preserve the natural character of a plant and in accordance with ANSI 300 standards. Remove all dead wood, suckers and badly bruised or broken branches to reduce potential injury or damage to people, vehicles and structures. Remove branches to provide 8 foot overhead clearance on walks and 12 foot clearance where maintenance vehicles require access. Make all cuts at the branch collar near the trunk or branch. Do not cut the leader. Do not top deciduous trees. Do not prune evergreen plants except to remove dead and broken branches. Make all cuts flush with the trunk or branch.

The pruning of trees should only be performed or supervised by a certified arborist. It should be done by nonprofessional crews only during an emergency situation or when there is an immediate issue related to public safety. The removal of dead trees should also be done by certified arborists.

Root collars should be cleared of soil, mulch, stones, brush and other items that could hide or cause decay that could cause a tree to fail. Keeping root collars clean helps control girdling roots and decay that leads to tree decline and failure. Questionable trees with cavities, cracks or seams in main stems or branches, or fungi fruiting bodies on or around the root area should be assessed for potential tree failure.

Failure prediction with any sort of accuracy is difficult. However, performing a systematic approach of evaluating each part of a tree with proven procedures that the International Society of Arboriculture has adopted through the guide know as "A Photographic Guide to the Evaluation of Hazardous Trees in Urban Areas" will help to eliminate most of the suspected hazards. Remedial action like pruning, installing support systems and removal will help reduce the failure percentages and the damage or injury to property or persons.

Mulching: Mulch is very valuable in supporting plant growth. It allows the soil to remain open to receive moisture and promotes the exchange of gases between the soil and the air. All introduced plantings should be mulched. Trees growing in an area with a restricted root zone, low nutrient levels, pH imbalance, low moisture conditions and soil compaction decline faster as they mature. Grass and weeds also compete for nutrients and moisture. While the removal of turf or grass under the branch spread to trees is often recommended for improved tree health, it is often not appropriate where tree canopies are large in open areas.

Shrubs: Spread fertilizer over the surface of the ground surrounding shrubs once a year during the spring. Soak the area thoroughly. Edge plant beds twice a month or as needed. Ornamental trimming or pruning should be consistent with the natural landscape and historic character. Plants should appear natural and healthy as opposed to geometric and fanciful. Prune to admit light and air to the center of the shrub. Prune only as plant growth requires, generally every 2 years. Prune spring flowering shrubs after they have bloomed. Prune summer flowering and other deciduous shrubs during the dormant season. Prune evergreen shrubs in late spring or early summer. Remove dead wood at any season.

Ground Cover: Where ground cover is preferred on steep slopes and/or in wooded areas, keep weeded continually. Avoid disturbing runners. Prune regularly to maintain a low spreading appearance. Remove vertical shoots. Fertilize at the same time lawns are fertilized.

Vines: Many vines are not a suitable ground cover as they are difficult to control. Remove aggressive vines from the site.

Pest Management and Plant Health
Insects, diseases and other pests are a normal part of nature. The safest and most responsible approach to preserve the site's plants while safeguarding the environment is "integrated pest management" [IPM]. IPM utilizes alternatives to chemicals for pest control and establishes a monitoring system for early detection. It requires a detailed plan to inspect specific plant species at specific times to detect evidence of problems. It also requires that trained personnel inspect the grounds, detect the presence of pests and apply the proper biological controls. While IPM is an essential program to pursue, current horticultural thinking recommends that grounds care move beyond IPM or incorporate it into the principles of plant health care that involves the concepts of selecting the proper plant material for any given location and providing the supportive culture needed to maximize plant development and minimize stress.

Volunteer Growth
Most, if not all, volunteer species should be removed. Volunteer growth should be removed on a yearly basis during the months when frequency of mowing is reduced and maintenance crews have time to remove it. Because lawn areas and edges attract volunteer growth, lawns must be mowed on a regular basis to keep this under control. The edges of lawn areas and individual elements must also be constantly monitored to keep volunteer growth in check.

Lawns
Rehabilitating existing lawn areas: In large areas where weeds and other undesirable species should be removed, the soil should be loosened by power rake, vigorous hand raking or rototilling. Fertilizer and pH adjustment should be added as recommended by soil analysis. Depressions that inhibit proper drainage of an area should be filled with topsoil to blend smoothly into surrounding grades. Bare spots should be topdressed, seeded and rolled. Water must be provided to maintain a sufficient moisture level to establish grass. The best time to plant a lawn is between August 15 and October 1. If it is necessary to plant in the spring, plant as soon as the ground can be worked and when the soil is free of excess moisture.

Installation of new lawn areas: In general sod is recommended in areas that need immediate use and seed is recommended for all other areas. Seed mixes should incorporate improved, low maintenance, slow growing, drought resistant and shade tolerant seed cultivar mixes of Kentucky Bluegrass and Fescue.

Watering: Water lawns as necessary to maintain normal growth and color. Soak the entire root area. Avoid light, frequent sprinklings. Water is essential to establish a lawn. Watering established lawns during the dry months of summer does not appear to be a realistic possibility at this time given the current budget, maintenance crew size and lack of an irrigation system except at the Little League field.

Mowing: Mow to an average height of 3 to 4 inches. The most serious issue is the routine removal of grass in the immediate vicinity of trees. Power mowers can scar and damage trees, attracting insects and disease. The best current solution is to mow with lawn mowers to within 12 inches of trees and then use weed whips [rotating nylon filament trimmers] to trim the remaining area.

Frequency of Mowing: An ideal schedule would include mowing every 5 days from the beginning of the season to mid June, every 10 days from mid June to mid August, and every 5 days from mid August to the end of the season. At the very least, mowing should occur every ten to fourteen days.

Rolling: Roll lawn areas in the spring as necessary to repair frost heaving irregularities caused during the winter. Use a light roller and roll the lawn when the soil is fairly dry, and freezing weather has passed.

Aeration: Aerate compacted lawn areas twice a year, once during the spring and once during the late summer or early fall. Do not aerate when the soil is extremely wet or dry.

Erosion Repair: Repair erosion on steep banks utilizing the same methods required for lawn installation. Include 100% biodegradable erosion control fabric for large areas.

Disease and Pest Control: When chemical controls are recommended, provide appropriate pesticide application twice a year in late spring and early fall, if necessary. Do not treat a new lawn until its second year of growth. Do not burn the grass by overapplying chemical treatments

Soils

Liming: Lime serves several important functions. It is of particular value in correcting the acidity of the soil. It also changes the structure of the soil, hastens bacterial action in the soil, aids in the liberation of plant foods which otherwise remain in the soil in an unavailable form, hastens the decomposition of organic matter and supplies a small amount of calcium, one of the essential plant foods. Ground limestone should be applied every 3 to 5 years as determined by soil test results to bring lawn areas to the preferred 6.0-6.5 pH level. If a lime application is necessary, apply it 2 to 3 weeks prior to fertilizing. The soil pH must be at the proper level to make the benefits of a fertilizer available to plants. Lime should not be used in combination with animal manures or with nitrogenous fertilizers, as it causes the rapid release of ammonia. A fall application of lime provides time for it to break down in the soil before spring growth.

When applying lime for new lawn construction, it should be spread over the surface of the ground and thoroughly mixed with the upper few inches of soil. The rate of application depends upon the form in which the lime is applied and the texture of the soil. The rate of application of ground limestone should be determined by soil testing and should not exceed 75 pounds per 1,000 square feet at any one time. For new lawns lime should be applied either in early spring or late fall, with early spring [April] preferred. On established lawns or under trees, lime should only be surface applied so as not to disturb roots.

Fertilizing: Supplemental fertilizer improves vegetative health and vigor in a short period of time. Trees and lawns are both heavy consumers of nitrogen and they compete for it. Because nitrogen leaches into the soil, it should be applied annually. Application methods are different for trees and grass. If fertilizer is applied on the surface, the grass absorbs most of it.

Soil tests are required for indication of existing fertilizing needs. Lawn areas should be fertilized a minimum of twice a year to maintain a healthy lawn. Light, frequent applications of readily available nitrogen fertilizers are preferred over heavy, infrequent applications. Lawn areas generally require 0.5 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per growing month. Application should be with a mechanical spreader when turf is dry.

All trees and shrubs to remain in open areas and at the edges of wooded areas should receive and annual application of fertilizer to sustain a reasonable level of health. Fertilizing with a slow release fertilizer with a ratio of 3-1-1 will not only improve the health, but will also prolong the life of a tree. Trees should be subsurface fertilized to a depth of 12 inches at least every other year during the growing season, with spring of fall preferred.

Circulation Systems and Materials

Issues

Well maintained, universally accessible circulation routes are key to the public's enjoyment of the site.

Recommendations

Paved Surfaces: Sweep clean paths and drives weekly from spring through fall. Repair paved areas as needed. Patch depressions of 1 inch or more annually. Repair cracks every 5 years. Repaint parking stripes every 2 years.

Maintain chip sealed surfaces as required for other paved areas. Hand sweep clean each spring to remove loose aggregate. Patch areas where aggregate has been removed due to other operations with methods and materials employed during the initial installation.

Granular Surfaces: Until the gravel or stone dust is replaced, examine walkway surfaces, after each heavy rainfall and repair erosion gullies by topdressing and compacting with path materials. Maintain the path cross section to prevent collection or diversion of overland flow. Rake granular surfaces as necessary to remove leaves, litter and other debris.

Snow removal is not provided at this site except for the service drive to Mason-Rice School. It is also not recommended because of the chip seal surface. For the service drive, which is not chip sealed, and proposed walks to the Recreation Center, remove snow, keeping it passable at all times and as safe as possible. Start snow removal when accumulation reaches 1 inch. Spread sand on icy spots and steps. The use of excessive amounts of salt for deicing is not recommended because it is toxic in excessive quantities to trees and other vegetation.

Active Recreation Areas

Issues

These facilities are the primary reason that the public comes to this site. They need to be kept in a safe, usable condition.

Recommendations

Playground Equipment: Follow specific equipment manufacturer's instructions for maintenance and schedule for inspections. In absence of such information, inspect equipment at least 3 times per year [early spring, early summer and early fall]. The inspection should include all parts including fasteners of each piece of equipment. Check for potential hazards including corrosion or deterioration form weathering, rot and/or insects. Check for sharp points, corners or edges on broken, loose, worn or missing parts. At swings, check for wear and openings on S hooks, and wear of bearing hangers. Check wood components for splinters, large cracks or deterioration. Repairs should be made immediately upon discovery of need or notification. Maintain a level play surface to prevent potholes from developing near swings and slides. Rake mulch smooth daily at slide exits and swing bases. Inspect mulch, rubber and other surfaces weekly and clear of broken glass, dangerous debris and other unwanted materials. Power wash plastic play equipment weekly to mitigate bacterial growth. Paint metal equipment once a year.

Soft Surface Courts: Prepare the courts at the beginning of each season by removing debris and loose material, rolling, providing new material for depressions, resetting line marking tapes, broom, water and roll. Inspect edging for damage on an annual basis and repair upon discovery of need. Brush tennis courts at least daily by pulling a broom or drag mat over the surface to insure the loose surface material is evenly distributed over the entire surface of the courts. Maintain the courts in a slightly damp condition. Roll the courts after heavy or prolonged rain and periodically [3 times per month] during the season when the surface is damp but not saturated. Provide minor repairs as required.

Hard Surface Courts: Sweep or vacuum clean basketball courts weekly. Provide new nets at the beginning of each season. Paint court lines each year. Repair cracks if necessary.

Baseball, Little League and Soccer Fields and Sledding Slopes: Follow guidelines for turf management. Restore infield surfaces, including filling in low spots, at least once a year at the beginning of each season. Backstops should be inspected and repaired once per season and cleaned as needed. Brooming and lining should take place as needed during the active season. The team benches should be inspected, repaired and repainted as necessary and at least once every 5 years.

Bleachers: Clean weekly. Inspect at least quarterly including all fasteners and connections. Make repairs immediately upon discovery of need or notification.

Buildings

Issues

Maintenance of buildings is essential for the public use and enjoyment of the site as well as staff accommodation and equipment storage.

Recommendations

The floors should be cleaned daily, as should rest rooms. Interior surfaces should be painted annually if needs. Exterior surfaces should be painted and cleaned as needed. Repaint structures as needed but not less than once every 5 years. Inspect roofs annually and repair upon discovery of any damage. If public use is affected, repairs should be made immediately or further damage may occur. Heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems should be inspected semi-annually. Plumbing and electrical work should be inspected annually. Nonworking lights should be replaced immediately. Special equipment should be maintained in accordance with manufacturers recommendations. Remove winter accumulations of leaves each spring.

Structural Elements

Issues

Because the site is located in a northern temperate climate, structural elements are subjected to a wide range of temperatures. This thermal stress requires regular examination and subsequent maintenance of structural elements.

Recommendations

Stone Walls: Exterior stone masonry needs routine maintenance at least once every 5 years. Inspect for cracked mortar, loose or broken stones and other movement annually. Remove volunteer growth in walls annually. Repair at least every 5 years.

Bridges: Inspect support components and railings at least once a year for stability to insure structural support. Replace weak or structurally deficient components.

Chain Link Fences and Gates

Issues

Although relatively durable, they do require periodic inspections and maintenance to extend their useful lives.

Recommendations

Inspect fences quarterly for holes, dents or other damage, and repair as needed. Repair damaged fabric as soon as possible. Replace and/or repair missing and bent components. Prepare and paint rusted sections. Repairs should be made immediately upon discovery of need or notification. Maintain gates for smooth opening and closing.

Inspect support posts at least once a year for stability to insure structural support. Replace weak or structurally deficient support posts. Rust stains on masonry and concrete copings or footings are primarily an aesthetic problem, as iron oxide deposits do not support botanic growth or harm masonry. However, rusting metal expands, and rusted support posts will crack masonry and concrete. This allows moisture penetration inside the coping or footing and eventually the wall foundation below where significant damage can occur.

Site Amenities

Issues

These are the elements that invite the public to use the site. They also provide the conveniences that much of the public has come to expect. They should be kept in a condition that sustains that sense of invitation.

Recommendations

Signs: Signs should be kept clean and legible. Text on all signs should be reviewed at least once every 5 years to insure that it is current.

Benches and Trash Receptacles: Inspect at least 3 times a year including all fasteners and connections. Repairs should be made immediately upon discovery of need or notification. Paint wood and metal components once a year. Treat unpainted wood with nontoxic wood preservative annually. Wash clean trash receptacles at least monthly from spring through fall.

Utilities

Issues

Maintenance of recommended utility systems will be essential for the rehabilitation of the playground.

Recommendations

Storm Drainage System: Inspect storm structures 4 times a year and remove sediments from catch basins in early spring or more often as required. Inspect the outlet structure at Hammond Brook 4 times a year and clean and repair as needed. Clean channels and storm piping at least every five years or more often as required. Remove all accumulated sediments, mud, leaves, litter and other debris. Repair fractures in masonry drainage structures as required.

Water Supply: Inspect all working parts and plumbing for leaks or faulty operation at least annually and repair at once.

Drinking Fountains: Inspect all working parts and plumbing for leaks or faulty operation at least annually and repair at once. Clean fountains at least weekly to maintain a neat and sanitary appearance. Drain plumbing each fall to prevent damage from frost and turn on each spring. Painted iron components should be repainted as necessary and at least every 5 years.

Irrigation Systems: Inspect all working parts and plumbing for leaks or faulty operation at least annually and repair at once. Inspect operation and distribution monthly and make repairs at once. Develop and maintain record drawings of the irrigation system.

Light Fixtures and Scoreboard: Repair damaged metal surfaces as damage occurs. Spot check and repair all surfaces every 5 years. Replace bulbs as needed, averaging every 2 years. Replace ballasts every 10 years.

LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE TIME REQUIREMENTS

The chart at the right includes an estimate to the time required for various landscape maintenance tasks. Items not shown include general inspection and repair of benches, bleachers, drinking fountains, signs and fences, as well as other miscellaneous items like snow removal for the Mason-Rice School maintenance drive and walks to the Recreation Center, travel time, and equipment repair and maintenance. Event and building maintenance has also been excluded.

Monthly Distribution of Continuous Tasks

TASKS	Frequency											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Litter												
Trash Pick up	-	-	-	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	-
General Litter Removal	-	-	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lawns												
Power Rake	-	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mechanical Aeration	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	-
Mowing [4″ max]	-	-	-	-	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	-
Edge Trimming	-	-	-	-	-	•	•	•	•	-	-	-
Fertilize	-	-	-	-	•	-	•	-	•	-	-	-
Weed Control	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	•	-	-	-	-
Disease & Pest Control	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	-	•	-	-	-
Seed Bare Areas	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	-
Leaf Removal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	•	-
Plants												
Mulch Beds	-	-	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disease & Pest Control	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	-	•	-	-	-
Prune												
Spring Flowering Shrubs	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Deciduous Shrubs	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Evergreen Shrubs	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dead Plants	Remove within one week											
Paved Surfaces												
Sweep Clean	-	-	-	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	-
Soft Surface Courts	-	-	-	-	•	•	•	•	•	•	-	-
Storm Drainage												
Inspection	•	-	-	•	-	-	•	-	-	•	-	-
Clean Out Catch Basins	-	-	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Irrigation System												
System Start Up	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Maintain and adjust	-	-	-	-	•	•	•	•	•	-	-	-
System Shut Down	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	•	-	-	-
Security Systems												
Inspection	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Vandalism												
Graffiti and other damage	Inspect for daily. Remove and repair damage within one week of occurrence											

Maintenance Time Requirements for Continuous Tasks

Area and Operation	Average Frequency per Year	Minutes per 1000 SF	Area in SF	Man Hours per Year
Litter				
Empty trash receptacles	150	-	-	75
Clean receptacles	8	-	-	16
Weekly Litter Pick up	26	0.1	779,790	34
General Litter Removal	1	4	779,790	52
Plant Bed Litter pick up	26	15	13,000	84
Lawns				
Mowing	24	1.1	625,410	275
Edge Trimming	12	25	10,000 lf	50
Rolling	1	1.1	625,410	11
Fertilizing	2	1.6	625,410	33
Weed, Disease & Pest Control	2	4	625,410	83
Mechanical Aeration	1	3.5	625,410	36
Overseeding	1	15	62,500	16
Seed Bare Areas	1	30	62,500	32
Leaf Removal	1	10	625,410	104
Line Field [Soccer]	2	960	-	32
Plants and Planted Areas				
Mulch Beds	1	30	13,000	6
Prune				
Shrubs	1	60	6,400	6
Trees	3	20	x200	200
Disease & Pest Control	2	10	13,000	4
Dead Plants	4	-	-	20
Walks and Drives				
Sweep/Vacuum	24	4	41,205	66
Repair Paving	1	20	41,205	14
Playground Area				
Surface grading/raking	24	8.1	13,000	42
Powerwash Equipment	24	30	-	12
Inspect and Repair	3	480	-	24
Paint Equipment	1	960	-	16

Soft Courts [Tennis]				
Preseason surface restoration	1	30	28,120	14
Surface grading/raking	182	2	28,120	171
Rolling	18	2	28,120	17
Repairs	26	1	28,120	12
Net Replacement	1	20	x5	2
Line Courts	1	20	x5	2
Hard Courts [Basketball and Practice Tennis]				
Sweep/Vacuum	30	3	8,015	12
Net Replacement	2	20	x1	1
Paint lines/repair cracks	1	20	8,015	3
Ballfields				
General Maintenance	26	240	x2	208
Clean Backstop	6	30	x2	6
Site Amenities				
Clean benches/bleachers	26	30	-	13
Inspect and Repair	3	240	-	12
Storm Drainage				
Inspection	3	-	-	6
Remove debris from brooks	3	10	64,040	32
Clean Out Catch Basins	1	-	-	16
Irrigation System				
System Start Up	1	5	32,400	3
Inspect and Repair	6	6.5	32,400	21
System Shut Down	1	5	32,400	3
Vandalism				
Repair Graffiti and other Damage	8	60	1,000	8
Repair Turf Damage	2	30	62,500	62
Total Time requirements per year				1,967

Maintenance Time Requirements for Periodic Tasks

Area and Operation	Average Frequency	Minutes per 1000 SF	Area in SF	Prorated Hours per Year
Lawns				
Soil Test	Every 5 years	3.5	625,410	7
Lime Application	Every 5 years	15	625,410	31
Planted Areas				
Soil test	Every 4 years	3.5	13,000	1
Deep Root Fertilize	Every 2 years	-	-	40
Safety Prune	Every 5 years	-	-	10
Paved Surfaces				
Repair Cracks	Every 5 years	-	-	8
Metal Surfaces				
Repair and paint	Every 5 years			20
Repair Damaged Surfaces	Every 5 years	-	-	20
Storm Drainage System				
Clean pipes	Every 5 years			3
Site Lighting				
Replace Bulbs	Every 2 years	-	-	15
Replace Ballasts	Every 10 years	-	-	3
Total Time requirements per year				158
Grand Total Time requirements per year				2,125

The above estimates assume implementation of these recommendations and only include the area of the playground. Mason-Rice School grounds and the perimeter right of way has been excluded.

ANNUAL MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS

Bark Mulch	120 CY
Fertilizer	1 TON
Lawn Seed	300 LBS
Screened Topsoil	50 CY
Tennis Court Surfacing	40 CY

PERIODIC MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS
[over a 20 year period]

Lime	100 Tons
Irrigation Heads	50
Paint	20 Gallons
Light Bulbs	60
Light Ballasts	12

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Landscape maintenance for this park and many other sites is provided by the Newton Parks and Recreation Department. While it is not the responsibility of this plan to assess the entire maintenance needs of the public grounds in the City, it should be noted that Newton Centre Playground represents only a small percentage of the total land area currently maintained by the existing maintenance staff. The time requirements shown here are only for Newton Centre Playground and do not take into account the many other responsibilities of department staff. It includes maintenance of about 18 acres of land.

The total identified annual landscape maintenance time requirement Newton Centre Playground is 2,125 hours. Various maintenance responsibilities are currently contracted out to vendors that maintain the Little League field and tennis courts. The City also has a vendor that is responsible for mowing and leaf removal. These vendors reduce the annual time requirement by 763 hours, leaving 1,362 hours as a City staff responsibility.

More than 90% of the landscape maintenance requirements occur within an 8 month time frame between April and November. Using 1,840 working hours annually per staff person, which allows for holidays, vacations and sick leave, the above landscape maintenance time requirements indicates that Newton Centre Playground would benefit most with one seasonal position during the 8 month busy season assuming outside vendors maintain their current responsibilities. In addition, it is beneficial for the City to maintain an arborist on staff or in a consulting position.

Each landscape character has its own requirements and potential hazards that maintenance personnel and staff developing budgets must be aware of. There needs to be maintenance standards and an interest in upgrading training beyond a basic level. Maintaining a continuity of maintenance staff with a commitment to the preservation of a place is critical. It is also beneficial in that this specialized knowledge becomes transferred to new staff members over time.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Issues

The Newton Parks and Recreation Department is charged with being the City's agent for maintaining the park and administering regulations and improvements related to the park. The permitting of events and organized recreational use has been established to preserve the public's enjoyment and appreciation of Newton Centre Playground. Preserving the significant existing features and furnishings of Newton Centre Playground as well as ensuring that future additions conform to the character of the park is the responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Department.

All construction in the park must be reviewed and approved by the Parks and Recreation Department. Other public agencies must be coordinated to administer Newton Centre Playground. It is the responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Department to establish and maintain strong lines of communication and guide coordination among agencies.

Recommendations

In terms of implementing this plan, the Parks and Recreation Department must take the lead role regarding review and approval. It is recommended that during this process, other City departments like Planning and Public Works be consulted as well as constituency groups. The public hearing process should remain part of the review and approval process for all improvements, except those of an emergency nature.

ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT

Partnerships

Issues

Most municipally owned recreation sites like Newton Centre Playground have no endowment funds. Care and restoration is funded primarily by the efforts of the City and the use of matching grants, if available. Funding for tree planting also needs to be pursued. State programs often provide funds for tree inventory and planting.

Recommendations

A Friends Group for Newton Centre Playground would be the primary advocacy voice to insure funds are dedicated to the care and improvement of the park.

Friends Groups and Citizen Participation

Issues

Partnerships formed between municipalities and local constituency groups like neighborhood associations, various societies and friends groups can be beneficial for parks. These relationships are essential for site management and successful fund raising. Local constituency groups are effectively the eyes and ears for these resources, providing oversight and watchdog functions. Local constituency groups may also provide support for grant writing activities. Incorporation as nonprofit entities would enable them to receive funds from charitable foundations, corporations and individuals where the city is ineligible.

Constituency group and volunteer efforts could be directed toward developing strategies and efforts to preserve and improve this park including inventories, cleanups, plantings, watering of newly planted trees, public education, interpretation, special events, the development of visitor brochures and guided walks to increase public awareness of this important site.

With the assistance of local constituency groups, support can be created by enlightening people as to the value or significance of this property to the City. Education can play a prime role in building community support. Newton Centre Playground could be used as an outdoor laboratory for local schools, giving classes in botany, biology and/or ecology.

Recommendations
The formation of a Friends Group for Newton Centre Playground is strongly recommended.

Working with Volunteers
Issues
Volunteer involvement is an integral part of the success of many projects like this. They provide the enthusiasm, energy and driving force behind most projects. Much responsibility falls to those faithful volunteers who see a project through from beginning to end.

Recommendations
Because of the nature of volunteer staff, a coordinator, preferably a paid position, is essential. The coordinator takes charge of all the varied talents and time schedules of volunteers, sets timetables for goal accomplishment, assigns tasks and follows up to insure that they are completed. This person keeps others informed and on track, and insures that each participant understands the project and his or her part in it. It is possible that one person could be responsible for coordinating the volunteer efforts in all of the City parks.

Recognition of Contributions
Issues
As funds are raised for improvements, donor recognition becomes an issue of concern.

Recommendations
Plaques, if necessary, should be grouped in an appropriate location so as not to detract from the primary experience of the park. If this is not acceptable, plaques for donated or memorial trees or benches should be mounted on concealed concrete bases and set flush with the ground. Plaques and bases should be of a uniform design with 4" x 6" x 1/4" cast bronze plaques recommended. A minimum gift level should be set to at least cover the cost of purchasing and installing a tree or bench and memorial plaque, and preferably also cover ongoing costs of maintenance and eventual replacement. It is preferred that donations be made to a Memorial Tree Fund that can also be used as an endowment.

Monuments, Memorials and Commemorative Markers

Issues

There is no policy in place regarding any aspect of monuments, memorials or markers and they have begun to appear in the playground. Lack of control can lead to a proliferation of these elements which do not necessarily contribute to the overall character intended for the playground.

Recommendations

A restricted growth policy for new monuments, memorials and markers is recommended to encourage the prudent use of Newton Centre Playground's precious space. Establish a moratorium on new monuments, memorials and commemorative markers until an overall plan, preferably a citywide plan, for the placement of these items is developed and approved. Recommended guidelines include:

- There should be a time lag of at least 25 years between the occurrence of an event to be commemorated, or the death of a person to be commemorated, and the acceptance of applications for memorials to this event or person. This should not apply to memorial trees. If a memorial is desired, memorial plants and furnishings, like trees and benches, should be encouraged provided they fit within the overall plan for the park. The latter should be limited and both should be considered temporal memorials in that they are not intended to last forever.

- No new memorials should be approved unless the events or individuals commemorated are significant and compelling, can be closely related to or associated with the City of Newton, and the memorial has compelling reasons to be erected in Newton Centre Playground rather than another location in the city.

- No new memorials or works of art should be approved unless provisions are made for the continued maintenance of at least the memorial itself and any changes made to the park to facilitate public enjoyment of the memorial.

- Any new monuments, memorials or markers should be placed in locations where they do not detract from the landscape as a whole and where they contribute to the appearance of the park. Considerations include location, size, material, texture, color and form of expression.

Events

Issues

Events tax the park's natural resources and City department budgets for site clean up and repair. Newton Centre Playground currently hosts a number of events.

Recommendations

Strong controls are recommended for events including permit fees and bonds large enough to cover the costs of preparation, security, landscape restoration and clean up. These fees and bonds should be established by the Parks and Recreation Department. Size, types and locations of events in the park should be controlled to insure that heavy damage from overuse does not occur.

Public Safety, Security and Public Relations with Abutters

Issues

Vehicles enter the playground after hours creating a disturbance for neighbors. Vehicles also occasionally drive onto the fields damaging them. Overly bright illumination late at night is another concern for neighbors.

Recommendations

Maintain locked gates at vehicular entrances. Unlock as required for emergency and service vehicle access. Along the edge, maintain a fenced, vegetated or other appropriate barrier edge to discourage unauthorized vehicular access into the playground.

Lights at athletic field and court facilities are discouraged to reduce disturbance to neighbors.

Dogs

Issues

The area of the soccer field is used as an unsanctioned, but not discouraged, off leash area for dogs. No significant problems have been reported to date.

Recommendations

Monitor use of the area for safety and sanitary reasons. Enforce applicable regulations.

Newton Centre Playground, undated
[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]

Selected Chronology

1688
Newton is incorporated as a town.

1726
Centre Park is acquired.

1848
Cochituate aqueduct provides Boston's first public water supply. The aqueduct is constructed along what will become northern edge of Newton Centre Playground.

1859
Grafton Park is acquired.

1868
Lincoln Park is acquired.

1872
Islington Park is acquired.

1873
Newton becomes a city.

1876
Sudbury aqueduct provides additional water supply for Boston. The aqueduct is constructed along what will become southern edge of Newton Centre Playground.

1877
A proposed plan for a series of parks is reported in the Newton Republican on February 10th.

1882
The Massachusetts Park Act becomes law, stating that a Park Commission is the only body authorized to acquire lands for park or playground purposes, for which appropriations have been made. Local papers provide commentary and opinion on this and a new city charter. The city votes for public parks.

1883
In his January 1st inaugural address Mayor William P. Ellison states "The City Council now have the power to take land for public parks, the act of the Legislature enabling it to do so having been accepted by the voters at the election held last November." "The necessity for parks is prospective rather than present; but wisdom dictates that the land for them should be secured while it is available, and of little value, rather than to wait until the city has become so thickly populated that parks are a necessity which must be supplied at a great cost." He also recommends that City Council accept a gift of land for a park in ward 7, and "that a joint standing committee on parks be appointed, whose duty it shall be . . . to comply with the conditions imposed by the donor, and also to endeavor to secure by gift, purchase, or both, suitable lots of land in other wards." The Newton Horticultural Association discusses the matter and recommends securing land for parks. Local papers provide commentary and opinion. Farlow Park is acquired.

1884
In his January 7th inaugural address Mayor J. Wesley Kimball states "Recognizing the very great value, both as regards comfort and beauty, of forest trees as an adornment of our highways, I would recommend that the setting out of such trees along the roadsides connecting our various villages be encouraged, and that the Committee on parks be requested to aid in inaugurating such a system of ornamentation, and that a reasonable appropriation be made for that purpose." He also reports that the "question of taking public lands under the Park Act, for a public park" received "considerable attention last year before City Council" and it was their "duty to decide" on the matter. He also noted that there were "several quite small parks belonging to city". Expenditures on parks during the year included $6,719.89 for labor and materials, and $25,000 for purchase. Loring Park is acquired.

1885
In his January 5th inaugural address Mayor J. Wesley Kimball reports that Lincoln Park in Ward 3 and Walcott Park in Ward 4 have been given to the City on the condition that they be maintained as public parks.

1886
The Olmsted firm begins work on the Newton Centre estate of Robert R. Bishop.

1887
Frederick Law Olmsted & Co. complete a plan for Charlesbank in Boston, the first open air gymnasium and exercise facility of its kind in a public park

1888
On April 9th Robert R. Bishop presents an essay to the Neighbor's Club entitled *What can we do for Newton Centre* recommending acquisition of 7 parcels of land for an 11 acre playground west of Centre Street. Later that month the Newton Centre Improvement Association considers purchasing the estate of Geo. C. Rand on Bowen Street and Hammond Brook, but does not acquire the land. In August, a plan is prepared with a suggestion for a boundary between the proposed playground and the properties of Caroline T. and Charles. P. Clark. The plan includes a drive from Tyler Terrace to Pleasant Street, but is not implemented. Linwood Park is acquired.

1889
In his January 7th address Mayor Herman M. Burr states "The agitation for a system of parks, which led in 1882 to the passage of a State law authorizing the City Government to take land under certain conditions for public parks and squares has unfortunately, I think, subsided. There is one great need of our people which has received far less consideration than its merits - the need of public playgrounds. Having been familiar with our villages from an early childhood and remembering well the time when almost every vacant lot and pasture was a playground, I have seen the boys of Newton driven from one field to another by the steadily advancing tide of increasing population, until there is little left to them but the public streets and remote pastures and wood lots. . . . The initiative has already been taken in one of the villages by a public spirited local society and in a few months Newton centre will contain a playground easily accessible to all the communities on the south side of the city."

On April 22nd the Park Committee of the Newton Centre Improvement Association shows a plan of the contemplated park and reports that the committee has already purchased one piece of land for $4,000. The Newton Centre Woman's Club provides $25 for the first subscription. A special deposit of $6,000 is made by the Newton Centre Playground committee for the purchase of land for a playground. Newton Centre Playground and Allison Park Playground are acquired. The outdoor gymnasium for men at Charlesbank opens.

1890

In his January 6th address Mayor Herman M. Burr states "The last City Council, by its contribution of $10,000 toward Newton Centre playground fund, has established a precedent from which it's successors are not likely to depart. It is much hoped that movements may be set on foot in the villages on the northern side of the city similar to that which has been so fruitful of results in Newton Centre. If two playgrounds could be provided for the four large villages the question would be well settled for all time. I hardly need remind you that every year's delay increases the difficulty of obtaining land which is suitable for the purpose at a price within the means of the citizens and the city."

In the final report of the Newton Centre Improvement Association regarding a playground and park for Newton Centre they recap the process and state that in 1888 they envisioned a park and playground of about 11 acres for a cost of about $15,000 and that they now had secured about 20 acres for about $25,000. The citizens had contributed more than $15,000 and the city paid $10,000. The work of laying out a playground and park remains. They also state that their attempt to combine an ornamented ground with a playground came from the character of land and its location.

In October, a survey of Newton Centre Play Ground is completed. In December, the Olmsted firm completes the first overall sketch plan [pencil on trace] for development of the site. They also prepare a Grading Plan and supporting cross sections and profiles for a portion of the site near Centre Street.

1891

City Council approves $1,300 to further prosecute drainage of park. City Engineer Albert F. Noyes reports that plans were prepared for drainage of a portion of Newton Centre Playground lying north of Hammond's Brook. Tile drains were laid at an average depth of 3'-9" about 24' apart discharging through a connecting pipe into the brook. He also states that it is advisable to have another section west of it completed. The system is installed by John Joyce for $332.38. The area is graded and seeded at completion. Another $255 is expended for material and labor. The City receives $8 for grass from the playground from Albert H. Roffe.

On April 30th Judge R. R. Bishop reports for the Park Committee of the Newton Centre Improvement Association on what had been done on the temporary ball field on Homer Street and the plan which had been prepared by Messrs. Olmsted and Co. He also reports that the grading on the Centre Street side has begun and that a strip of land from Mrs. Peck has been purchased through the generosity of Mr. Bray who furnished the needed money. There was also a gift of about 7,500 feet of land needed for the playground from Mr. L. L. Melcher.

In March, the Olmsted firm completes a Preliminary Plan for Newton Centre Playground. In July, they prepare a revised Grading Plan with supporting profiles and cross sections for a portion of the site near Centre Street.

The outdoor gymnasium for women at Charlesbank opens.

1892

On April 27th Mr. Harbach of the Newton Centre Improvement Association reports that the ballfield has been drained and leveled and would soon be seeded. The City is building a sewer through the playground that must go under the aqueduct [city of Boston] giving the opportunity to change the course of the brook.

The City prepares several plans in December related to drainage including a plan showing areas requiring drainage, a plan for surface drainage, and a plan showing proposed locations of park areas, drainage and aqueducts, all including the area of Newton Centre Playground. Much of this work is in response to order no. 11680 of 24 June 1889. The work also includes a report by the City Engineer and Edward A. Buss, CC. A chain of parkways between villages is seen as an economical location for drains and sewage. The report recommends open channel construction through parkways or reservations except through high priced localities or under special circumstances where they would be treated as ornamental rather than as a detriment to surrounding properties. An open channel treatment is recommended for Hammond Brook for a greater portion of its length.

$1,300 is appropriated for drainage. John Joyce receives $671.56 for labor, A. H. Roffe receives $116.45 and C. A. Harrington receives $36.14 for lumber.

1893
On March 13th Mr. Noble of the Newton Centre Improvement Association suggests making a running track for boys in playground. A committee is appointed to investigate the matter. On June 12th the track committee is authorized to prepare a track and grounds for July 4th. On September 30th the Committee on grading at the Centre Street end of the playground recommends a slight change in course of the walk to make easier grades and also recommends widening the walk to 20'.

At the request of the Newton Center Improvement Society, the City sets lines and grades to lay out paths and grade up the grounds.

The Park Department lists Newton Centre Playground as 20.0 acres of 138.33 acres under their control. The playground was the largest site prior to the acquisition of additional land for park system [Lower Falls Park with 46.00 acres and Auburndale Park with 21.75 acres]. Expenditures for Newton Centre Playground are $475.85 with another $890.41 for care.

Metropolitan Parks is authorized with plans to acquire for public reservations some of the most desirable bits of natural scenery among the hills and along the streams of the metropolitan district, before they are improved or otherwise appropriated for private uses, all with a view of a comprehensive park scheme.

On November 9th Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot send a letter to Judge R. R. Bishop requesting overdue payment.

1894
Expenditures for material, labor and teams at Newton Centre Playground are $399.89.

1895
On June 4th the Park Committee of the Newton Centre Improvement Association is authorized to equip the tennis courts on the playground with nets, tape, etc., and provide proper care for the same. On October 9th the purchase of vacant land on Centre/Bowen Streets is discussed. Frederick Law Olmsted retires from practice in September.

1897
Additional land is acquired for Newton Centre Playground, given to the City by residents of that village. On October 5th the Park Committee reports that a proposal for flooding a portion of the playground could be presented shortly. An open air gymnasium is considered. In December a plan is completed showing areas requiring drainage throughout the city.

1898
The 1st annual report of the Street Commissioner which includes the Park Division notes that the addition to the playground in Newton Centre was laid out. Expenditures are $1,031.24. Newton Centre Playground is listed as 16.41 acres, one of 28 city controlled parks on 159.95 acres. On January 10th the Park Committee of the Newton Centre Improvement Association reports that the City Engineer and Superintendent of Streets commented on impossibility of providing skating in the park due to nature of soil. On April 6th the Parks and Grounds Committee reports that flooding for skating had been tried and that it had not worked. On June 11th the Park Committee is authorized to grade parts of the playground adjacent to the tennis courts. On October 4th the Park Committee is authorized to enclose the tennis courts with a suitable wire fence and to construct a path on the north side of the tennis courts to connect with the present path.

1899
On April 1st the Park Committee of the Newton Centre Improvement Association reports that a culvert has been built over the brook at Centre Street. 3 large shrub beds have set out. An open air gymnasium has been installed, a dressing room built at the running track and the tennis courts are entirely enclosed with wire netting. Additional paths and grading has been completed and a low fence has been built to protect the path at the southwest entrance of the park on Centre Street. Expenditures for Newton Centre Playground are $255.24.

1900
On January 11th the Park Committee of the Newton Centre Improvement Association reports that a dike has been built to a flood portion of the playground for skating. The 3rd annual report of the Street Commissioner including Sewers, Street Lights, Parks and Burial Grounds notes that the amount of money [$225.17] spent on the Newton Centre Playground has not been as large as in former years.

1901
On October 10th the Newton Centre Improvement Association votes to authorize $100 for flooding. Expenditures for Newton Centre Playground are $207.66.

1902
The Playground and Social Service League of Newton Centre is organized to help the playground movement. With the assistance of the municipal government new swings, sand boxes, and equipment for sports are provided for Newton Centre. The running track is repaired, fields marked off for ball games, new walks and bridges constructed, and numerous events staged. Expenditures for Newton Centre Playground are $190.57.

1903
Mayor John W. Weeks repeats concern about Metropolitan Parks legislation and the assessments to support metropolitan parks when Newton maintains their own parks at a high standard. Auburndale Park and Lower Falls Park are transferred to the Metropolitan Park Commission with the understanding that the Commission should care for them as it does other parks of the Commonwealth, and with the provision that if the arrangement should not prove satisfactory they should be transferred back to the city. Expenditures for Newton Centre Playground are $257.82.

1904
The American Civic League creates a Department of Public Recreation. Expenditures for Newton Centre Playground are $259.62.

1905
Expenditures for Newton Centre Playground are $758.00.

1906
The Playground Association of America is organized. Expenditures for Newton Centre Playground are $207.53.

1907
On October 8th the Park Committee of the Newton Centre Improvement Association discusses additional tennis courts, but no action is taken. Expenditures for Newton Centre Playground are 613.41.

1908
A new department is created by the Board of Alderman, Forestry, that is no longer under the Street Department. On February 11th Mr. Gray of the Newton Centre Improvement Association reports that the City would probably appropriate funds for park improvements. He recommends that the Association present the city with a comprehensive plan of improvements. Herbert J. Kellaway is authorized to proceed for not more than $100. In March the City Engineer completes a survey of the playground. Mr. Kellaway completes a General Plan for the Development of Newton Centre Playground in May. Expenditures for Newton Centre Playground are $1,657.23.

1909
Three additional tennis courts are built, a reinforced concrete bridge is constructed over Hammond Brook and a coal tar concrete walk is laid from the junction of Centre Street and Tyler Terrace, via the new bridge, to the elbow in Bowen Street. A bubble drinking fountain with single cup is erected in Newton Centre Playground and 9 other locations in the city due to the generosity of a citizen.

In the 1st report of the Forest Commissioner it is noted that a competent man is employed during the summer months to cut the grass and look after shrubs and flower beds. He states that "The playground movement has an excellent start. We hope to equip them so they will be a common meeting place for all the children of the city." He also reports that "We have developed one large playground during the year, in Newton Centre."

A description of the 1908 Kellaway plan is published in The Newton Circuit on June 11th.

The International Prison Congress, at its October meeting in Washington, adopts the following resolution:- "It is resolved that to prevent habits of vagrancy and idleness among children in large cities, there should be vast additions to playgrounds, wholesome recreation centers, gymnasiums and athletic fields as the surest preventives of juvenile mischief and crime and as affording young people places where they may learn to bear defeat with courage and success with modesty."

1910
In the address of Mayor Charles E. Hatfield, he states "The different wards are rapidly acquiring playgrounds and I feel that it would be a very wise policy for the city to provide more playgrounds before the larger areas are devoted to building operations." Forest Commissioner Charles I. Bucknam states "The playground has come to mean as much to the community as the public school; some educators say it means more. At any rate the growth of the movement is wonderful. Ten years ago there were sixty playgrounds in thirty cities; now there are sixteen hundred in three hundred cities." "Newton's largest playground is in Newton Centre, Ward 6, and is bounded on the north by the Aqueduct and Bowen Street, on the east by Centre Street, on the south by Tyler Terrace and on the west by Pleasant Street. During the year the ball-field and tennis courts were kept rolled, and the grass was kept cut and a man was in attendance to do any other work required." Newton Centre Playground is listed as 16.41 acres with assessed value of $31,000.

1911
A second baseball diamond is laid out for smaller boys. Additional swings are provided during the summer. Owing to the revival of interest in archery, a range is measured off and leveled, and targets are purchased which are used during the fall.

1912
A platform for children's games is built, a set of tennis register boards is erected, tennis tape is relaid and a man is kept in attendance to cut the grass and maintain the grounds. It is recommended that sanitaries be provided for Newton Centre Playground. On 18 March an order establishes the Playground Commission with Ernst Hermann, Superintendent. About the 1st of July, control of playgrounds turned over to Playground Department.

1913
2 new tennis courts are built. The Forest Commissioner reports that beds are laid out and shrubs planted at the Homer Street entrance. The Bowen Street entrance is raised, graded and planted with shrubs. Playground Department establishes permit applications for use, and rules and regulations. The latter notes that dogs on leash are allowed in the playground and that horses must stay on paths. Contributions from the Social Service and Playground League pay salaries of 2 directors during July and August. Contributions from local Improvement Societies provide funds for play implements. Newton Centre Playground is listed as 21.41 acres including 4 acres of land and some buildings that are held in trust but used by the department. It has a valuation of $38,500.

1914
World War I begins. On May 22nd The Newton Circuit publishes Kellaway's general plan of development.

1915
In his address Mayor Edwin O. Childs states "Playgrounds and their activities are today a necessity not a luxury, and that department is just as important as the Police or Fire Department. It conserves both life and property. The boy without a playground is the father of the man without a job. The secret of play is the secret of life itself. Those that make a study of the young realize that youth must have legitimate outlet for surplus vitality."

Newton Centre Improvement Association, Playground and Social Service League, and Newton Centre Woman's Club meet to raise money for moving and equipping the old building of Trinity Church to a place on the side of the playground where it would be convenient for its new use as athletic headquarters. The building is sited by Herbert J. Kellaway. The Recreation Hut, the original Trinity Church which was moved to this site when the new Trinity Church was built. The Trinity Association was established in 1889 by a group who wished to hold Episcopal services. The building was first located on Pelham Street, moved to Homer and Centre Streets and then to the park. [NHS] The Newton Circuit publishes plans and an elevation of the building on April 23rd, and a description of playground house on September 24th.

1916
The Forestry Department recommends that playground maintenance be placed under that department. A $500 appropriation is made for a convenience station with the building donated by the city. Expenditures include $315.69 for grading and $29.62 for a bridge.

1917
The United States enters World War I. An appropriation $250.00 is made for grading.

1918
World War I ends.

1919
In his 1 January inaugural address Mayor Edwin O. Childs states "At Newton Centre six acres of land and a building ought at some time be acquired."

1922
In his January 1st inaugural address Mayor Edwin O. Childs states that there is "considerable public demand for grading, bridges and improving of land transferred by the Metropolitan Park Commission on the Newton Centre Playground."

1924
In his January 1st inaugural address Mayor Edwin O. Childs states "Newton is an acknowledged leader in the Recreational Movement. We are fortunate in having parks and playgrounds."

1925
In his January 1st inaugural address Mayor Edwin O. Childs states "some fencing is needed at Newton Centre Playground."

1929
In his January 2nd inaugural address Mayor Edwin O. Childs states "Park and playgrounds attract right-minded tax-payers who are willing to pay for sunlight, beauty, the opportunity to enjoy exercise, a sense of space and contact with nature and God's great out-of-doors."

Newton Centre Playground is listed as 25.00 acres with 7 acres used as a playground but not yet owned but held in trust for the city. 2 acres are included but belonging to the Metropolitan Water Department.

An appropriation of $500.00 is made for a toboggan slide.

1930
In January a plan for Toboggan Slides is prepared by William P. Morse, City Engineer. An outdoor stage is created for the Tercentenary pageant. A permanent stage [outdoor auditorium of rising grass terraces] is recommended for outdoor pageantry, drama and music festivals. The Forestry Department is placed under the Street Department.

1931
An appropriation is made for a boundary fence and a fence around the tennis courts. It is noted that club activities at the Recreational Hut are growing more popular every year with local boy and girl scout associations, young peoples basketball clubs, and the Newton Dramatic Club.

1932
A considerable increase has been made in appropriations since 1929 to relieve unemployment in Newton. Weekday and holiday permits include 150 for baseball, 95 for football, 6 for field hockey, and 128 miscellaneous. Sunday permits include 14 for baseball, 2,750 for tennis, and 3 miscellaneous.

1933
Weekday and holiday permits include 159 for baseball, 102 for football, and 173 miscellaneous. Sunday permits include 11 for baseball, 3,482 for tennis [most in the city], and 26 miscellaneous.

1934
Weekday and holiday permits include 94 for baseball, 80 for football, 52 for the archery range [only @ Newton Centre Playground] and 294 miscellaneous. Sunday permits include 14 for baseball, 8 for football, and 8 for archery. There are 37 days of tobogganing between December 16 and March 2.

1938
Plans for upgrading the brooks are completed in February. Improvements include stone masonry walls enclosing a grouted stone waterway set deeper than the existing brook, realigning the junction of the 2 brooks and covering a portion of Hammond Brook adjacent to the tennis courts. Appropriations are made for park benches throughout the system. There is hope to improve sanitary facilities on playfields. A December report on Municipal Recreation in Newton by Weaver W. Pangburn of the National Recreation Association includes a recommendation for neighborhood centers.

1939
A new ordinance on July 7th changes the name of the Playground Department to the Recreation Department and increases the commission from 5 to 6 members. Ernst Hermann retires after 27 years. F. E. Wilson is Commissioner. World War II begins.

1940
Newton Centre Playground is called William C. Brewer Playground. It is reported that "archery, long popular at Newton Centre Playground, is likely to spread to Cold Spring". Weekday and holiday permits include 39 for baseball, 7,014 for tennis [most in city], 12 for the archery range [only@ Newton Centre Playground], 15 for cricket [only @ Newton Centre Playground], 46 basketball [most in city], 40 for softball, and 294 miscellaneous. Sunday permits include 4 for baseball, 31 for archery, 3,338 for tennis, 1 for cricket and 68 miscellaneous.

1941
In addition to general maintenance, improvements include reconditioning the cottage. The Newton Archery Club has approximately 300 competing in tournaments. The Newton Cricket Club competes with teams from several New England cities at Newton Centre Playground. Outdoor facilities are listed as field house, storage sheds, 5 tennis courts, 2 drinking fountains, baseball diamond, archery range, toboggan slide, nursery, swings, slides, sand boxes, teeters, work benches, small games, cricket and softball diamond. Indoor activities include dancing, dramatics, boy scouts' meetings, public speaking classes, wood-craft and sewing. The United States enters World War II.

1942
Dim out regulations limit the night use of facilities.

1943
New cement steps are installed from Tyler Terrace to the tennis courts.

1944
Public speaking classes are added to the list of indoor activities.

1945
The annual 4th of July celebration, sponsored by Newton Centre Improvement Association in years past, was revived this year at Newton Centre Playground. 32 victory gardens are added to the list of outdoor facilities. World War II ends.

1948
A general increase in use is noted to be about 25%. The toboggan slide is very active during the winter and there is coasting on the hill next to the building. The city provides 15 toboggans for rental and purchased 7 new ones to replace 3 that were beyond repair. Improvements are made to the basketball court and backboards and the tennis backstops are repaired for a cost of $2,102.15. Outdoor facilities are listed as field house and storage sheds, baseball diamond & backstop, 5 tennis courts, 1 basketball court, archery range, toboggan slide, softball diamond, jungle gym, swings, slides, teeters, sand boxes, work benches and gardening. Land value is listed as $129,000 and the building value as $7,700. Estimated value of playground equipment is $6,102.42, barn $2,600, and playground house $1,200.

1949
There are 18 days of tobogganing and tennis exhibitions.

1950
There are 9 days of tobogganing and tennis exhibitions.

1951
Cochituate aqueduct is abandoned.

1952
The Homer Street entrance and service roadway is rebuilt and blacktopped. There are 17 days of tobogganing. City of Newton purchases the Cochituate aqueduct for sewer line use.

1954
Parks Commission is created under Public Works. There are 11 days of tobogganing with 22 toboggans available for rental. The slide is noted as extremely fast and may be used only under supervision. An increase in tennis participation is noted.

1955
There are 16 days of tobogganing.

1956
There are 20 days of tobogganing. The clay tennis courts receive daily care.

1957
A new Mason-Rice School is to be built on Newton Centre Playground on land purchased for school purposes plus land transferred from recreation use to school use. This reduces the playground to its current size of 17.9 acres. Maintenance staff makes improvements to the playground to accommodate the change. Because the new school is to be built on site of present archery range, it has to be relocated. Turf in the area is in excellent condition and is cut and relaid at the track that is to be eliminated. The old running track that had been constructed above grade level of the athletic field is considered a serious hazard to good baseball. Since it is not now being used as a track and was almost completely overgrown with grass and inadequate, it is deemed advisable to level, loam and seed this area. A 2 to 12" cut is necessary to bring the track back to turf level, plus another 8" for loam. The baseball diamond and infield is in need of complete rebuilding and regrading. "This field had originally been laid out according to scale over 40 years ago but had never been properly graded. The turf had been almost completely burned out because of the 1957 summer drought, the edges of baselines had filled in with baseline subsoil, and the edges of the infield grass were badly frayed." It is decided to rebuild to establish lines and grades according to present day standards with sod and loam from other areas of the park. The garden area has excellent loam with an average depth of 3 to 4 feet. Approximately 4,000 cy of loam are removed and stockpiled. Fill from Cleveland Street is used to raise the level of garden area. 8" of loam are placed on top and the area is graded and seeded. There are 24 days of tobogganing with 24 toboggans available for rental at $0.50/ hour. Private toboggans may be used for $0.50 per day. The toboggan slide is featured on WBZ-TV News.

1958
There are 13 days of tobogganing with a recorded attendance of 9,398. The Recreation Department constructs an archery hut from available salvaged or second hand lumber. Newton Archers furnish all finish lumber.

1959
There are 3 days of tobogganing.

1962
A new merry-go-round in installed. The Recreation Hut is open regularly after school and Saturday mornings.

1963
A special redcoat surfacing is installed on the 5 tennis courts by the Recreation Department to allow the courts to be used much sooner after a rain. Weekly children's archery classes begin, hoping to spark revival of the Newton Archers. Golf lessons are provided.

1964
The Little League field is given heavy topdressing and reseeding. The Newton Judo Club is headquartered at the Recreation Hut.

1965
New protective fencing is installed and new water lines are installed at the Little League field by the Water Department. A new tot lot play area is installed with the "latest imaginative apparatus".

1966
A practice tennis court is installed. It is noted that the toboggan chute has night lights and a warming shelter.

1967
A new asphalt basketball court is added.

1968
The little league field is enclosed in chain link fencing.

1970
The size of Park Commission increases from 6 to 9 members. Recreation Department headquarters are moved from City Hall to 70 Crescent Street.

1972
Pop Warner football lights are added.

1978
The toboggan slide is dismantled. Sudbury aqueduct is discontinued but maintained by MWRA as a backup source of water.

1982
Fire alarm systems are installed in Recreation Department buildings.

1983
The Parks and Recreation Department is formed as a result of a merger of Recreation Department and the Forestry Division of the Public Works Department.

1985
Park benches are repaired and painted.

1988
300th anniversary of Newton's incorporation as a Town. New playground equipment is installed at Mason-Rice School.

1990
Renovation of the clay courts begins. Care of trees is privatized.

1991
The Jay Gordon Little League Field is dedicated in April. In May a controversy develops over the placement of sponsor signs at the field.

1992
The basketball court is seal coated.

1993
The Recreation Hut is renovated with new ceilings, floors, paint and a heating system.

1995
The basketball court receives repairs and lighting.

1996
Art classes are provided in the Recreation Hut.

1999
School garden is added at Mason-Rice School.

2005
An accessible play area is added to the Mason-Rice school play area. In August, a plan for handicap access improvement is prepared for a path from Bowen Street to the play structure area. In September a plan for a new play structure is prepared by Landworks Collaborative. Neither plan is implemented. A jungle gym is removed from the play structure area.

[Bold = Letters in Library of Congress folders, not microfilmed]

Olmsted Firm Correspondence

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

27 May 1890
Letter to F. L. Armstead [FLO] signed by Albert F. Noyes, City Engineer, initialed by V

30 October 1890
Letter to Judge Robert R. Bishop from FLO & Co.

18 December 1890
Letter to Albert F. Noyes, C.E., from F. L. Olmsted & Co.

13 April 1891
Postcard to F. L. Olmsted & Co. signed by Robert R. Bishop

14 April 1891
Letter to F. L. Olmsted & Co. signed by Robert R. Bishop

22 April 1891
Letter to Avery S. Rand from FLO & Co.

23 April 1891
Proposal for Newton Center Playground by Olmsted Associates [unsigned]

8 May 1891
Letter to JCO signed by Robert R. Bishop

11 May 1891
Letter to "Dear Father" [Frederick Law Olmsted] from JCO

12 May 1891
Letter to JCO signed by Robert R. Bishop

4 June 1891
Letter to Albert F. Noyes from FLO & Co.

24 July 1891
Letter to FLO signed by Albert F. Noyes

10 February 1892
Letter to Albert F. Noyes, C.E., from F. L. Olmsted & Co.

13 February 1892
Letter to Albert F. Noyes, C.E., from F. L. Olmsted & Co.

20 February 1892
Letter to Albert F. Noyes from F. L. Olmsted & Co.

9 November 1893
Letter to Judge R. R. Bishop from Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot, – requesting overdue payment

22 October 1894
Letter to R. F. Alvord, Secretary, from Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot

Available Drawings

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
Project No. 1061

31 December 1869
Plan of the Estate of Charles P. Clark, Newton Centre, Mass., Scale 40′ = 1″, Shedd and Sawyer, Engineers, ink on linen [1061-1]

17 August 1888
Suggestion for a Boundary Between Proposed Playground and Properties of Caroline T. and Chas. P. Clark, Newton Centre, Scale 40′ = 1″, pencil on trace [1061-4]

17 August 1888
Suggestion for a Boundary between Proposed Public Playground and Properties of Caroline T. and Chas. P. Clark, Newton Centre, Scale 40′ = 1″, ink on linen [1061-3]

October 1890
Plan of Newton Centre Play Ground showing contours, Newton, Mass., Scale 40′ = 1″, Alfred F. Noyes, City Engineer, ink on linen [1061-2]

13 December 1890
Newton Centre Playground, Newton, Scale 40′ = 1″, pencil on trace [1061-6]

17 December 1890
Newton Centre Playground Grading Plan for Portion near Centre Street, Scale 40′ = 1″, pencil on trace [1061-8]

18 December 1890
Newton Centre Playground Profiles, pencil/ink on grid paper [1061-14]

18 December 1890
Newton Centre Playground Cross Sections to Accompany Plan for Grading Portion near Centre Street, Scale 10′ = 1″, pencil/ink on grid paper [1061-13]

26 March 1891
Newton Centre Playground Preliminary Plan, Scale 40′ = 1″, print [1061-7-pt1]

July 1891
Newton Centre Playground Revised Grading Plan for portion near Centre St., Scale 40′ = 1″, pencil on trace [1061-12-tp1]

9 July 1891
Newton Centre Playground Revised Grading Plan for Portion near Centre St., Scale 40′ = 1″, blueprint [1061-12-pt1]

10 July 1891
Newton Centre Playground Profiles & Cross-Sections to accompany revised Grading Plan, Scale for Cross-Sections, 10′ = 1″ Scale for Profiles: Vertical 4′ = 1″ Horizontal 40′ = 1″, blueprint [1061-15-pt1]

no date
View of Gate House, pencil on paper [1061-5-sh1] - Sudbury Aqueduct structure at the corner of Tyler Terrace and Pleasant Street

no date
Newton Centre Playground View of Gates, pencil on paper [1061-5-sh2] - Sudbury Aqueduct structure at the corner of Tyler Terrace and Pleasant Street

CITY OF NEWTON

March 1908
Plan of Newton Centre Playground, Irving T. Farnham, City Engineer

May 1908
General Plan for the Development of Newton Centre Playground, Herbert J. Kellaway

March 1911
General Plan for the Development of Newton Centre Playground, Herbert J. Kellaway

1 January 1930
Untitled Plan for Toboggan Slides, William P. Morse, City Engineer

26 February 1938
Hammond Brook Project, Ernest H. Harvey, City Engineer

30 August 2005
Plan for the Handicap Access Improvement at Newton Centre Playground

2 September 2005
Site Plan [for Universal Play Area], Landworks Collaborative

Tree Inventory and Assessment

site	species	dia	biotic deficiencies	structural deficiencies	cultural def.	cond. %	appraise
1,661	ash spp	21	insect, boring	deadwood	none	1	$70.00
1,662	maple, sugar	32	conk/fruiting bdy	included bark	none	70	$18,200.00
1,663	maple, sugar	30	none	trunk decay	none	65	$15,100.00
1,664	oak, white	32	none	deadwood	none	90	$26,100.00
1,665	oak, white	31	none	none	none	90	$24,500.00
1,666	maple, norway	16	none	deadwood	none	35	$1,810.00
1,667	maple, norway	17	none	deadwood	none	50	$2,910.00
1,668	pine, red	29	none	none	none	90	$12,700.00
1,669	pine, red	18	none	none	none	85	$4,680.00
1,670	maple, norway	19	none	trunk decay	none	40	$2,890.00
1,671	maple, sugar	23	none	included bark	none	85	$11,700.00
1,672		0				0	$-
1,673	maple, norway	18	none	included bark	none	80	$5,200.00
1,674	maple, norway	22	none	none	none	70	$6,800.00
1,675	pine, red	18	none	none	none	70	$3,850.00
1,676	pine, red	18	none	none	none	70	$3,850.00
1,677	pine, red	18	none	none	none	70	$3,850.00
1,678	pine, red	18	none	none	none	70	$3,850.00
1,679	pine, red	18	none	none	none	70	$3,850.00

1,680	spruce, norway	19	none	none	none	85	$8,000.00
1,681	spruce, norway	21	none	none	none	85	$9,800.00
1,682	unknown	19	none	crook	none	75	$-
1,683	maple, red	18	none	deadwood	none	80	$6,000.00
1,684	maple, red	18	none	deadwood	none	80	$6,000.00
1,685	spruce, norway	20	none	included bark	none	80	$8,400.00
1,686	pine, white	16	none	none	none	80	$5,400.00
1,687	pine, white	16	none	none	none	80	$5,400.00
1,688	pine, white	16	none	none	none	80	$5,400.00
1,689	pine, white	16	none	none	none	80	$5,400.00
1,690	pine, white	16	none	none	none	80	$5,400.00
1,691	pine, white	16	none	none	none	80	$5,400.00
1,692	pine, white	16	none	none	none	80	$5,400.00
1,693	pine, white	16	none	none	none	80	$5,400.00
1,694	pine, white	16	none	none	none	80	$5,400.00
1,695	pine, white	16	none	none	none	80	$5,400.00
1,696	maple, norway	24	none	deadwood	none	80	$9,200.00
1,697	spruce, white	17	none	deadwood	none	80	$5,400.00
1,698	linden, american	21	none	none	none	80	$7,000.00
1,699	maple, silver	5	none	deadwood	none	80	$430.00
1,700	oak, red	28	none	deadwood	none	80	$18,200.00
1,701	oak, red	30	none	deadwood	none	85	$22,100.00
1,702	pine, red	24	none	deadwood	none	80	$7,800.00
1,703	maple, norway	14	none	none	none	85	$3,390.00
1,704	maple, red	5	none	none	none	70	$510.00
1,705	maple, red	18	none	included bark	none	85	$6,400.00
1,706	birch, eur white	32	none	none	none	70	$9,600.00
1,707	spruce, white	16	none	none	none	70	$4,180.00
1,708	pine, white	19	none	none	none	85	$8,000.00
1,709	pine, white	15	none	none	none	75	$4,470.00
1,710	pine, red	15	none	none	none	80	$3,090.00
1,711	pine, red	15	none	none	none	80	$3,090.00
1,712	pine, red	15	none	none	none	80	$3,090.00
1,713	pine, red	15	none	none	none	80	$3,090.00
1,714	pine, red	15	none	none	none	80	$3,090.00


Newton Center Playground Tree Inspections April 2006
Tree Health Condition
0 - 20
21 - 40
41 - 60
61 - 80
81 - 100
HOMER ST
FURBER LA
BOWEN ST
TYLER TER
CENTRE ST

1,715	pine, red	15	none	none	none	80	$3,090.00
1,716	pine, red	15	none	none	none	80	$3,090.00
1,717	pine, red	15	none	none	none	80	$3,090.00
1,718	pine, red	15	none	none	none	80	$3,090.00
1,719	pine, red	15	none	none	none	80	$3,090.00
1,720	maple, sugar	28	none	dieback-major	none	60	$12,200.00
1,721	unknown	14	disease, branch	none	none	65	$-
1,722	spruce, norway	15	none	none	none	80	$4,770.00
1,723	spruce, norway	15	none	none	none	80	$4,770.00
1,724	spruce, norway	15	none	none	none	80	$4,770.00
1,725	spruce, norway	15	none	none	none	80	$4,770.00
1,726	spruce, norway	15	none	none	none	80	$4,770.00
1,727	spruce, norway	15	none	none	none	80	$4,770.00
1,728	spruce, norway	15	none	none	none	80	$4,770.00
1,729	spruce, colorado	16	insect, branch	deadwood	none	65	$3,880.00
1,730	pine, white	24	none	none	none	80	$12,000.00
1,731	spruce, norway	18	none	none	none	85	$7,200.00
1,732	ginkgo	29	none	deadwood	none	90	$17,300.00
1,733	maple, sugar	29	none	none	none	85	$18,500.00
1,734	maple, sugar	28	none	deadwood	none	70	$14,200.00
1,735	maple, sugar	21	insect, other	deadwood	none	50	$5,800.00
1,736	maple, sugar	20	none	none	none	85	$8,900.00
1,737	maple, boxelder	30	none	trunk scar	none	50	$4,800.00
1,738	maple, sugar	10	none	none	none	79	$2,180.00
1,739	maple spp	30	none	none	none	60	$13,200.00

Note: Inventory and assessment provided by City of Newton

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